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The UNESCO COURIER

WINDS OF FREEDOM

VACLAV HAVEL
DESMOND TUTU
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OCTAVIO PAZ
FEDERICO MAYOR
ALAIN TOURAINE
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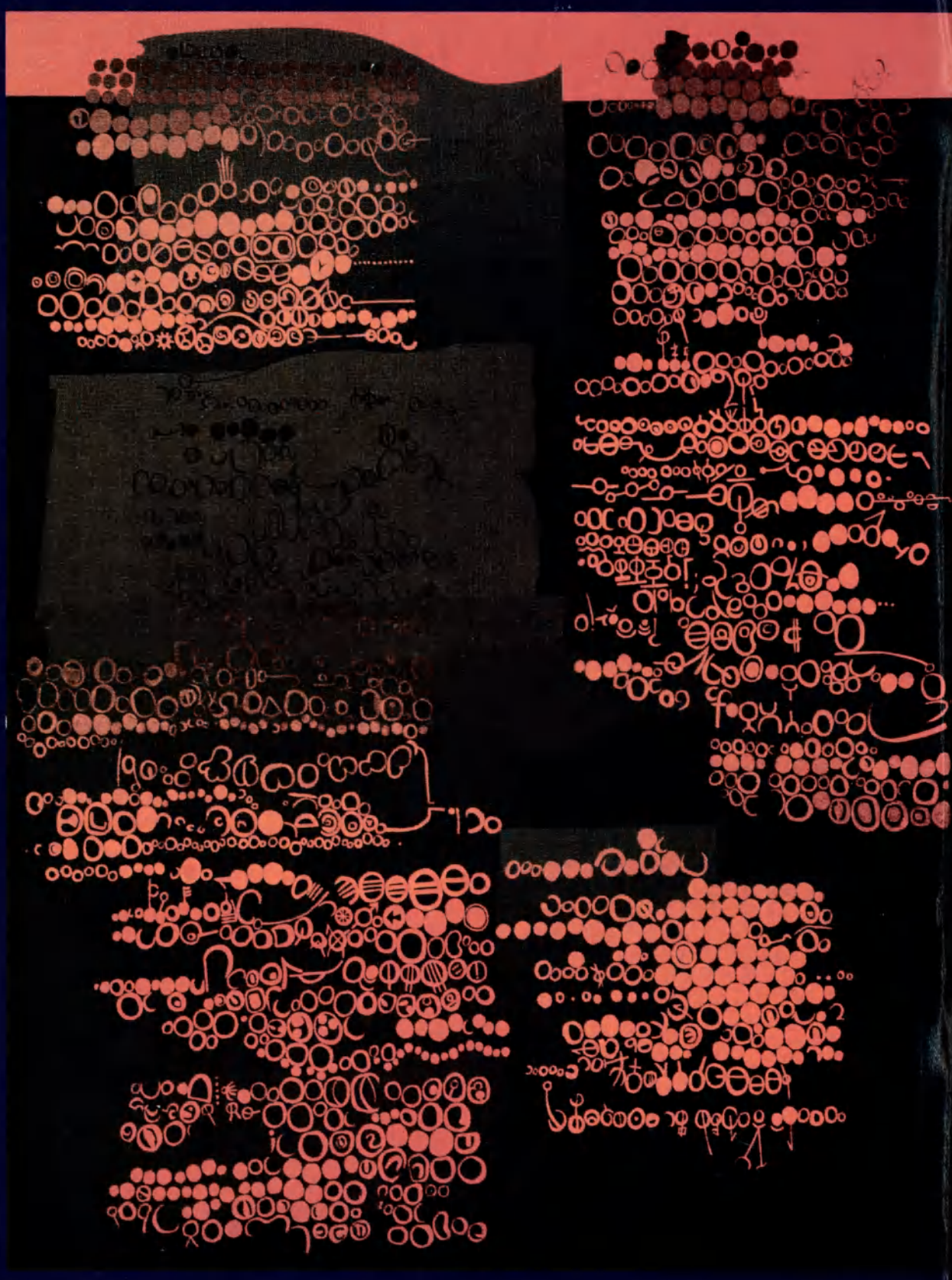
encounters

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance.
Please add a short caption to all photographs.



The Tablets of the Law
1977, oil on canvas
(81 x 65 cm)
by Gervais Bataillé

The nebula-like compositions of French artist Gervais Bataillé take the spectator into what one critic has called "a mathematical dreamland". By creating a counterpoint of forms and colours he attempts to build up "a kind of common ground where the different languages of a civilization merge into one".

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Today there are no more unexplored continents, unknown seas or mysterious islands. But while we can overcome the physical barriers to exploration, the barriers of mutual ignorance between different peoples and cultures have in many cases still not been dismantled.

A modern Ulysses can voyage to the ends of the earth. But a different kind of Odyssey now beckons—an exploration of the world's many cultural landscapes, the ways of life of its different peoples and their outlook on the world in which they live.

It is such an Odyssey that the *Unesco Courier* proposes to you, its readers. Each month contributors of different nationalities provide from different cultural and professional standpoints an authoritative treatment of a theme of universal interest. The compass guiding this journey through the world's cultural landscapes is respect for the dignity of man everywhere.

Special consultant for this issue:
Ehsan Naraghi.

Cover:
The Tightrope Walker (1990), 81 x 65 cm, oil on canvas by the French painter Isabelle Wolff.

Back cover:
Sky (1982), 2 x 1.50 m, oil on canvas by the French painter Gérard Fromanger.

DOCUMENT

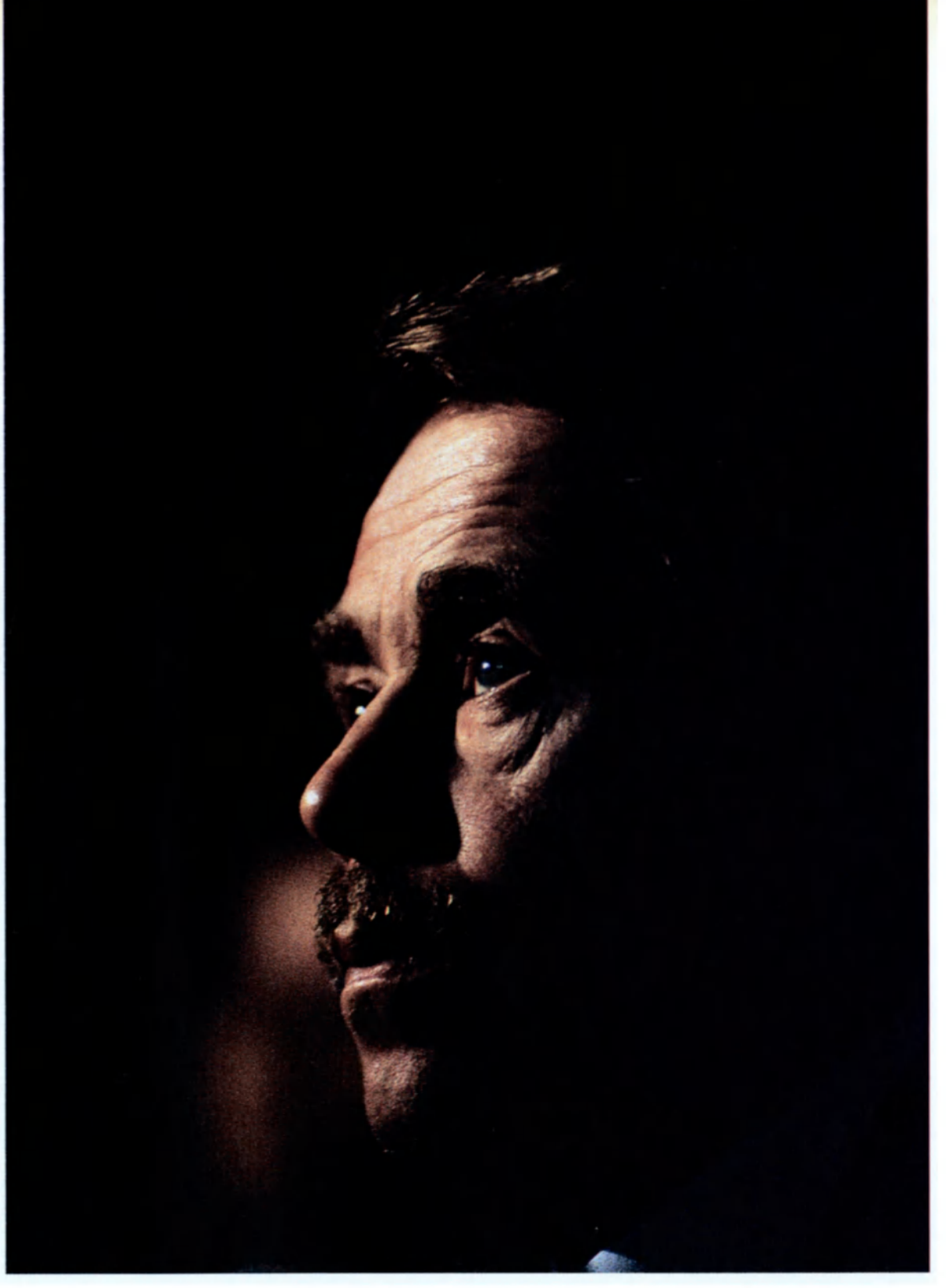
VACLAV HAVEL

President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, is a playwright and a fighter for freedom. It was as a dissident writer that he won the reputation that led to his election as President on 29 December 1989, becoming thereby the symbol of the peaceful revolution that had taken place in his country. ■ In 1968, after the brutal termination of the "Prague Spring" in which Vaclav Havel had played a leading role, production of his plays was banned in Czechoslovakia, although his trilogy ***Interview, A Private View*** and ***Protest*** (1975-1976), was staged in many other countries. Because of his human-rights advocacy and resistance to oppression he was arrested several times and spent a total of five years in prison. ■ The following interview, here published for the first time in its entirety, was conducted on 30 June 1989 in semi-clandestine conditions at Vaclav Havel's home near Prague. We publish it as an exceptional document of its time—the weeks before the banned playwright moved into the centre of the stage.

This conversation is taking place in rather a strange atmosphere. You're under observation, and yet you still speak without taking any special precautions.... Are you, or are you not, free to come and go as you please?

– I've been very isolated until the last few years, but not any longer. The isolation was effective during the 1970s, at a time of widespread social inertia. People seemed to have lost heart, seemed not to believe that social change was possible any more. They had stopped taking an interest in public life, which anyway was systematically stifled. People had withdrawn into themselves, with very little communication between individuals.

It was a period when society became fragmented, when everyone was isolated from everyone else. I was particularly isolated because I belonged to the category of people who, in the wake of the Soviet invasion of 1968, were to some



extent singled out as enemies of the state. It was dangerous to have anything to do with us. I was a banned writer. I couldn't get work anywhere...

Then, little by little, things started to change. Today, the situation is radically different. Not that the party or government leadership has changed its policy. They're still the same. But society, society's changed. People are perhaps just tired of being tired. They're emerging from their shells again, from their isolation. Something akin to public life is taking shape once more.

New generations are growing up, who have not been stigmatized by the trauma of the Soviet invasion. It's been a gradual, a progressive development—though a significant one all the same. But in my case, I've been able to follow this development quite closely, owing to the fact that I've been arrested and imprisoned a number of times. When you go to prison, you somehow take along with you your awareness of the situation as it is when you're arrested. Afterwards, for a while, you remain outside the development of events and this frozen memory remains in your mind. Then, all of a sudden, you come out of prison. At such times, you're particularly alive to all the changes which may have taken place in the intervening period. At the end of each of my prison terms, I've been surprised by new developments. Each time, society was more alive, the apathy had retreated still further, more and more people had woken up...

Have you at any time had to stop writing?

– My plays have been banned in Czechoslovakia for twenty years, but I haven't stopped writing. You can't really prevent a writer from writing. His mission is to continue writing, speaking, even under the most difficult circumstances. So I went on publishing things. Where? Abroad, but above all in samizdat, clandestine form.

In the early 1970s, two mutually hostile cultures appeared in this country. One of them official, authorized, the other clandestine, independent. After a modest start, samizdat publishing mushroomed. Today, dozens of samizdat magazines and newspapers are published, as well as hundreds of books and even a current affairs video. In recent years, cracks have started to appear in the barriers between these two cultures. A no-man's-land has developed between them, which has sometimes been called the "grey zone". There has been cross-fertilization—the official and the independent cultures have moved closer together, each of them having realized that it has no monopoly over culture. It is this inner pressure, this growing awareness, which has caused the rapprochement, and not some sort of liberalization of the cultural policy of the authorities.

What in your view is the political and social role of intellectuals?

– Intellectuals are right to think about the future. They mustn't be afraid to deal with the future, to imagine how it might be. But their primary task, their chief priority is, in my view, to understand the present, to understand its crises and put a name to them. That is how true awareness of perspectives is born.

The politicians' role is to build the best of all possible worlds. The intellectuals must watch, warn, put people on their guard. They must to some extent monitor the politicians, remind them how they become divorced from reality when they follow the shams of ideology. When I say this, I'm speaking as someone disillusioned with ideology. A disillusionment which has been experienced by all this part of Europe. We live in conditions which force people to reflect upon the bankruptcy of ideologies.

What we want, here and now, are simple, elementary things. Without reference to any ideological framework, beyond all ideology. We aspire to a share in the basic values of life, those which simple common sense and elementary human dignity demand we should be entitled to. Yet what have we actually experienced? An attempt to subjugate the world to ideology. And what a failure! Perhaps it will make the intellectuals realize that it is not enough to construct a theory and then twist reality to fit in with it. Alive and

Works by Vaclav Havel translated into English include:

Plays: *The Memorandum,* Eyre Methuen, London, 1981; *The Vanek Plays* trilogy, University of British Columbia Press, 1987; *Largo Desolato,* Faber & Faber, London/Grove Press, New York, 1987; *Temptation,* Faber & Faber/Grove Press, 1988.

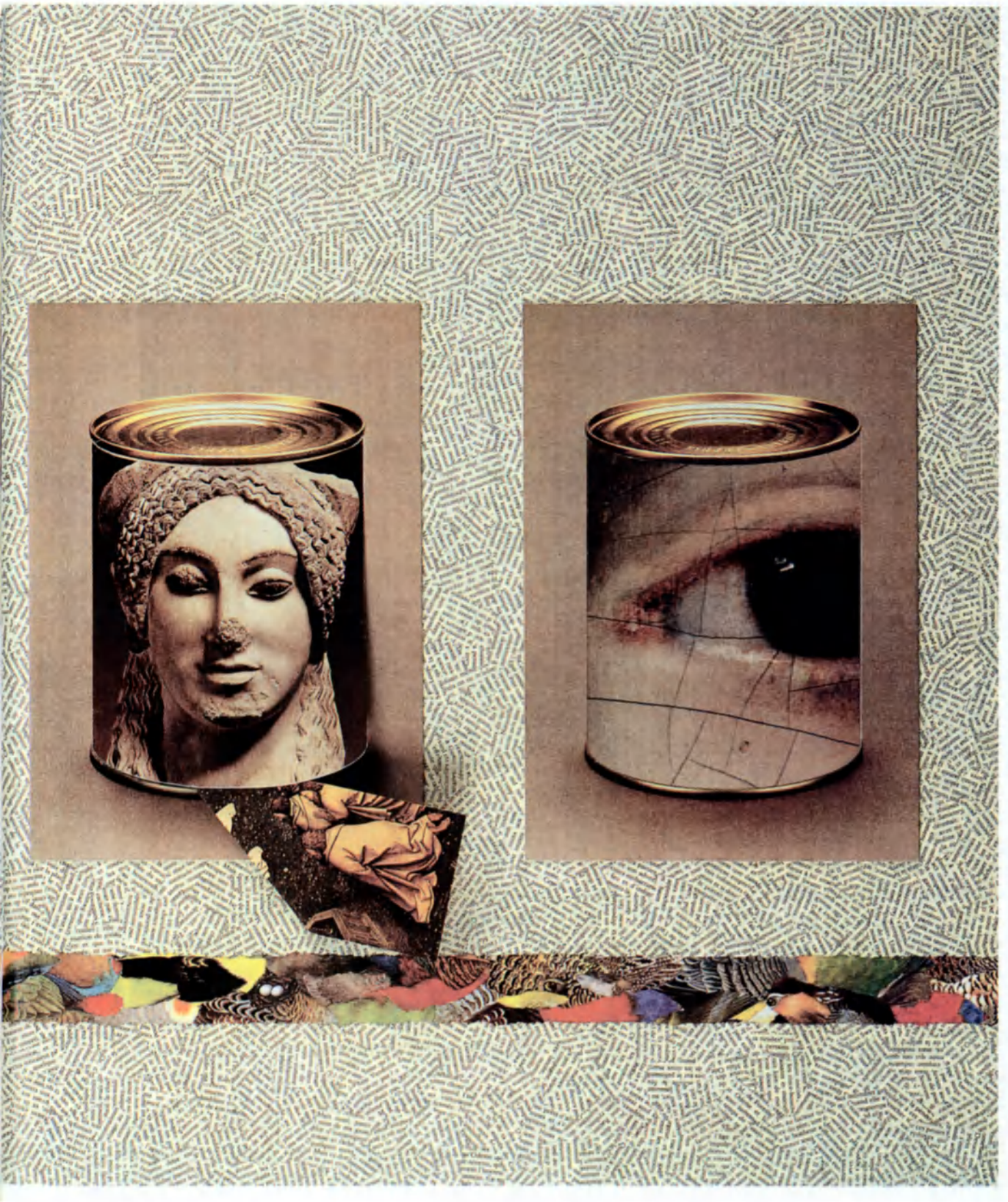
Essays and other writings: *Letters to Olga* (1979-1982), a collection of correspondence from prison to his wife, Faber & Faber, 1983, reissued 1989; *Vaclav Havel: Or Living in Truth,* Faber & Faber, 1987.

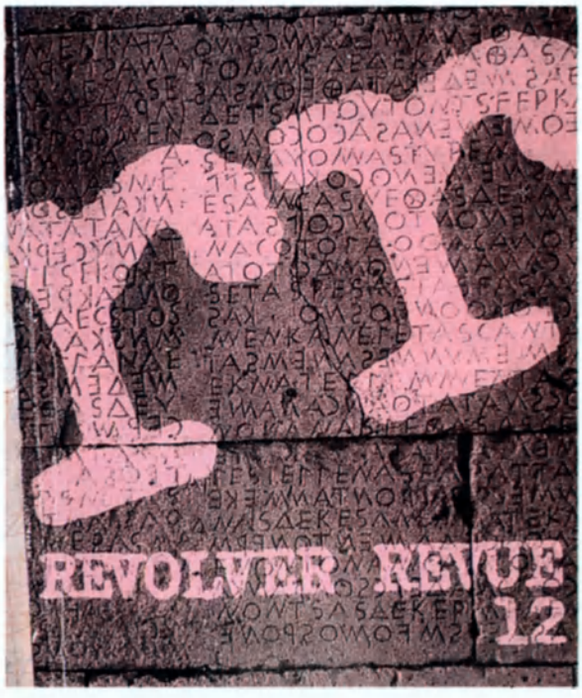
Letter to Freedom. The torches of your pupils accompany me throughout the journey (1989), collage by the Czech artist Jiri Kolar.

mysterious, reality transcends all imaginable theories, plans, concepts. To order and organize it calls for humility and respect for the richness, the diversity, all the colourful variety of life. It is impossible to stretch it out on the Procrustean bed of a utopia created by the cold mind of an ideologist. But in our part of the world, this is what has been done. It's a total failure. Hence the mistrust of plans and theories on the part of the intellectuals in Eastern Europe. Hence our desire to stick to analysing the present, which is the best way of planning the future.

Do you see any difference between the respective roles of intellectuals in the East and in the West?

— The first difference is that, in most of the communist bloc countries, even recently, politics, the political debate, seemed to have vanished. Totalitarianism banishes politics. Deprived of all political culture, society cannot build its natural defences, public opinion cannot be born. Politics does not even have any professional ground where it can be practised. But a strange thing happened. Politics, chased out of the door, came back in through the window. It suddenly





invaded the whole spectrum of social life. Secretly, everything took on political significance: a concert, a mass, a fair.... In such circumstances, the writer's word acquires an extraordinary aura. Especially if he strives to tell the truth, without fear of the problems he is bringing down on his own head, if he ceases to be the docile interpreter of authority. Why is the writer so important? Because the tool with which he works is language, which calls a spade a spade, which asks questions. It is the quintessential tool of culture. In our country, the writer's cultural audience is on a par with the level of political expectation—immense. Many people from the West are struck by this. People are desperately eager to hear what is going to be said, expressed. It is their own hopes, their freedom, which thus seem to take shape. It is as though society, through the medium of this cultural ferment, becomes varied, structured. Writers, upon whose shoulders there weighs a growing political responsibility, have to be correspondingly more demanding.

Does this desire for change in Eastern Europe and in other parts of the world mark the advent of a new era?
— I'm not a futurologist, nor am I a seer. I do not know where the world community is heading. Everywhere, I observe the economic, political, ecological signs of a deep-seated crisis. In my view, this crisis is an existential crisis, a crisis of identity: man has lost the sense of responsibility he had previously felt towards something higher than him, something which transcended him. There are many men and women in the world who have felt it, understood it and who are seeking a way out.

Perhaps the end of the millennium will see new perspectives opening up. There are already some encouraging signs: a slowing down of the arms race, attempts at peaceful co-existence, the Helsinki agreements. Signs which are still modest. The most brutal and obvious aspects have already been tackled. But the most dangerous aspects are precisely those which aren't visible.

Will the gulf between West and East disappear?
— I honestly don't know. The differences between the two worlds are so enormous.... For decades, these two systems have had a different history. Today, the communist-type totalitarian system, which, following the example of the communists themselves, I would call "stalinist socialism", has reached stalemate. People are starting to realize this in the East. Whence the related efforts to introduce an element of democratization, of perestroika. This fact is vitally important. The East is taking a step towards the West. Is the western world for its part capable of taking a step towards its neighbour? I don't know. The West is defending values which are good for humanity as a whole. It has no desire to abandon them and in this it is absolutely right. I suffer whenever it relinquishes some of them: we subscribe to these values too. As for the upheavals which the West is experiencing, most of these strike me as variants of this profound crisis of civilization which I have already referred to. The West can only solve these problems by itself.

But there is one serious problem which is common to both systems, and that is excessive centralization. Here, political power, the economic levers, energy resources, everything lies in the same hands. So in fact the state is the sole employer, the sole organizer of social life. This is monstrous. In the West, though in different forms—increasingly vast undertakings, gigantic conglomerates—you find the same trend towards total centralization. The result, on both sides, is the same "anonymization" of life in general, though of course in our case it looks more directly shocking. Human links, relations between one person and another, are disappearing from the workplace, but also from social life, from towns, from homes. The individual is becoming just a cog in an immense machine. He is losing all sense of his work and of his existence. Both systems ought to be capable of overcoming this dehumanizing phenomenon, each in its own way. When they have done so, perhaps they will find a way of moving closer together...

At this decisive turning point for the future, can intellectuals do anything to change the course of events?
— By their very nature, intellectuals are powerless in certain fields. They cannot change the world as politicians do. Their presence in the world is marked by what they say, they act through words. I have written an essay entitled "The power of the impotent", in which I have tried to explain how a true word, even when spoken by a single person, is more powerful in certain circumstances than entire divisions of soldiers. The word illuminates, awakens, liberates. The word also has its power. The intellectuals must hang on to or acquire this power of theirs, in order to turn it to advantage. They must not desire any other power than this. Let them leave the power of immediate transformation or social organization to the politicians.

Above, illustration by the French artist Michel Granger for the cover of Amnesty International's annual report, 1987. Opposite page, cover design by Gabina Farova for *Revolver Revue*, a Czechoslovakian samizdat publication (1989).

What cause do you think intellectuals should use their power to serve?

— On the eve of a new millennium, the most precious possession we ought to defend, and which should find unanimous support among people everywhere, regardless of their country or the system under which they live, is a certain number of human qualities, of fundamental values. And first of all, humility. Many cruel events which we have experienced at the end of this millennium, such as Hitlerism, Stalinism or the excesses of Pol Pot, show the vanity, the arrogance of groups or individuals, of fanatics or non-fanatics, of ideologues, doctrinaires, utopians. The arrogance of those who think they know how everything ought to be, who think they can decide the order of things. When reality doesn't fit in with their theories, they impose their theories and these lead straight to the camps, to massacres, to horrendous wars. This lack of humility can also be observed elsewhere than in the strict political domain. Pride is also at the root of the global ecological crisis: man imposes his will upon nature, without respecting her laws, her secrets. There is plenty I could say on this subject.... Let us not forget the meaning of freedom, of dignity, of justice. And let us be more humble. ■

A video film of this interview, by Michel Bongiovanni, was made by the Centre International de Création Vidéo, Montbéliard-Belfort, France (director Pierre Bongiovanni).

WINDS

FEDERICO MAYOR

OF FREEDOM

A momentous chapter in the history of our century has opened. Suddenly, in vast areas where once there was silence voices can be heard and freedom is beckoning. In autumn 1989 the bicentenary of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was commemorated in magnificent fashion: within a few short months, Europe witnessed the fall of bastilles, the disappearance of watchtowers, the opening of frontiers and the reawakening of dormant enthusiasms. The reverberations of these events are being felt throughout the world, encouraging questioning and hopes which in turn herald new democratic harvests.

Such a historic moment bears some resemblance to the aftermath of the Second World War, when citadels of hatred and contempt were also swept away on a rising tide of optimism, and the future was bright with promise.

Unesco and the other organizations of the United Nations system were founded in an attempt to realize this tremendous promise. Unesco itself was entrusted with the mission of mobilizing the world's finest intellects in order to encourage the mutual exchange of knowledge and learning on a global scale and the acceptance of collective responsibility for a cultural and natural heritage which had become indivisible...

But for a long time there were only limited chances that this message would be heeded. The flame of hope lit when the fighting ended soon flickered out. New walls between peoples were erected, and new restraints were placed on their freedom. The last days of colonialism were dangerously prolonged, and the Cold War set in, sustained by the arms race and proliferating local and regional tensions. Four decades would pass, years of countless sacrifices, struggles and compromises, of tentative initiatives and mistakes, of heroism and wisdom, before the outlines of a situation recalling that of 1945 began to emerge.

For many people today, the collapse of the Berlin wall symbolizes a time of renewed promise because it is a culmination of the quest for freedom, dignity and solidarity which has been undertaken on every continent in recent decades. It is the sign of a new maturity, which has been won at high cost by the peoples of both North and South and has led them to seek common cause rather than war, co-operation between independent nations rather than power struggles between the dominant and the dominated, democracy as a means to individual fulfilment and social development, culture as an essential feature of life.

The winds of Freedom have begun to blow again, and with what force! They urge us to shoulder the formidable task of constructing democracy everywhere. It is a task of paramount importance and urgency. Now as in the past the keys to success are dialogue between cultures, the mobility of persons, ideas and creative works, the widest possible intellectual exchange. This time shall we come closer to realizing the great dream of universal citizenship?

Moments so rich in possibilities are rare. When they occur no effort should be spared to grasp them and make the fullest use of all they offer.

It is thus more timely than ever for Unesco to pursue wholeheartedly its mission as interpreter of the collective hopes of humanity. With this in mind, the *Unesco Courier* has asked some leading figures of today to identify and interpret for us some of the signposts pointing to the world of tomorrow. ■

In this vivid eyewitness account written in the heat of events, a historian captures the atmosphere of Berlin when the wall was breached late in 1989 and reflects on the wider significance of this great symbolic event of our time

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

BY ROBERT DARNTON

© Robert Darnton, 1990

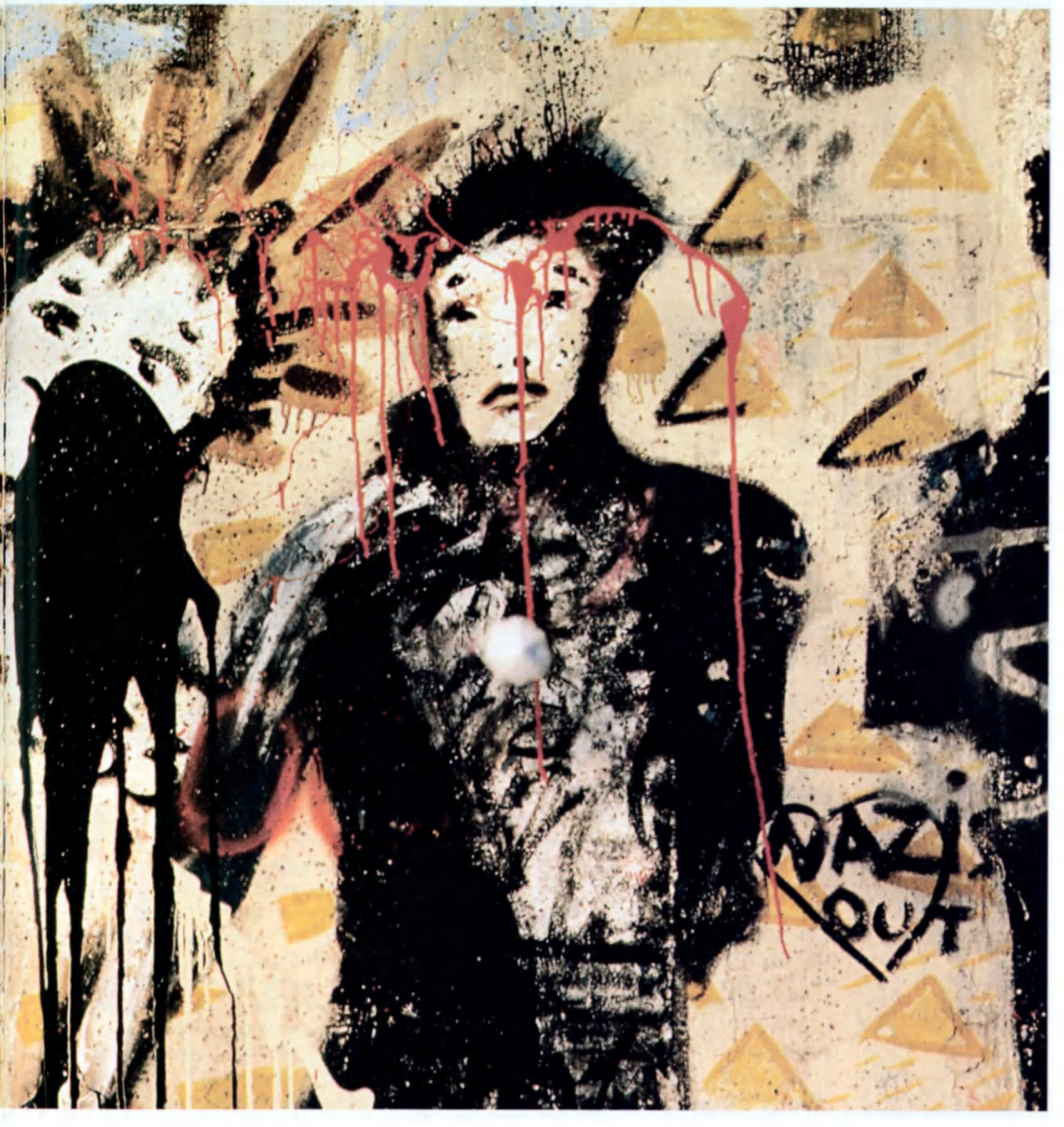
ON the morning of 10 November 1989, when both Berlins woke up wondering whether the first flood through the wall had been a dream, the West Berlin tabloid *Volksblatt* ran two headlines, shoulder to shoulder, on its front page: "The Wall is Gone" and "Bonn Demands the Destruction of the Wall".

Both were right. The wall is there and it is not there. On 9 November, it cut through the heart of Berlin, a jagged wound in the middle of a great city, the Great Divide of the Cold War. On 10 November, it had become a dance floor, a picture gallery, a bulletin board, a movie screen, a video cassette, a museum, and, as the cleaning lady of my office put it, "nothing but a heap of stone". The taking of the wall, like the taking of the Bastille, transformed the world. No wonder that a day later, in Alexander Platz, East Berlin, one conqueror of the wall marched in a demonstration with a sign saying simply "1789-1989". He had helped dismantle the central symbol around which the post-war world had taken shape in the minds of millions.

To witness symbolic transformations on such a scale is a rare opportunity, and it raises many questions. To begin with the most concrete: what happened between 9 and 12 November, and what does it mean?

'Goodbye to all that'

The destruction of the wall began in the early evening of Thursday 9 November, soon after the first wave of East Berliners, or "Ostlers" as they are called by the West Berliners here, burst upon



Paintings on the wall.

the West. One Ostler, a young man with a knapsack on his back, somehow hoisted himself up on the wall directly across from the Brandenburg Gate. He sauntered along the top of it, swinging his arms casually at his sides, a perfect target for the bullets that had felled many other wall jumpers, like Peter Fechter, a young construction worker, who was shot and left to bleed to death a few feet in front of Checkpoint Charlie on 17 August 1962. Now, twenty-seven years later, a new generation of border guards took aim and fired—but only with power hoses and without much conviction. The conqueror of the wall continued his promenade, soaked to the skin, until at last the guards gave up. Then he opened his knapsack and poured the water towards the East, in a gesture that seemed to say, "Goodbye to all that".

A few minutes later, hundreds of people, Ostlers and Westlers alike, were on the wall, embracing, dancing, exchanging flowers, drinking wine, helping up new "conquerors"—and chipping away at the wall itself. By midnight, under a full moon and the glare of the spotlights from

the watchtowers in no-man's-land, a thousand figures swarmed over the wall, hammering, chiselling, wearing its surface away like a colony of army ants. At the bottom, "conquerors" threw stones at its base or went at it with pickaxes. Long slits appeared, and the light showed through from the East, as if through the eyes of a jack-o'-lantern. On the top, at the centre of the tumult, with the Brandenburg Gate looming in the background, an Ostler conducted the destruction, a sickle in one hand, a hammer in the other.

By Saturday, chunks of the wall were circulating through both Berlins. People exchanged them as souvenirs of what had already taken shape in the collective consciousness as a historical event: the end of the Cold War. A sidewalk entrepreneur sold bits of wall from a table on the Ku'damm: 20 marks for a piece of the past. At one point, an East Berliner walked by and objected, with a smile on his face: "You can't sell that. It's our wall. It belongs to us."

Like any powerful symbol, the wall has acquired many meanings, and they differ significantly from West to East. The wall even looks different, if you study it from one side and then the other. Seen from the West, it is a prison wall, which encloses the East Berliners in totalitarianism. Tourists climb on observation towers and shudder deliciously at the spectacle: the monstrous, concrete structure, the no-man's-land beyond it—which, until 1985, was mined and rigged with rifles that fired automatically at anyone who dashed across—the barbed wire, the dog patrols, the turrets with armed guards staring back through binoculars, and the second wall or the windowless buildings on the far side of the deadly, desolate, open space.

East Berliners see a different wall. Theirs is painted in patterns of light and dark blue, clean, bright, and free of all graffiti. It shuts off the view of the repressive apparatus beyond it. If you lose your way or stray into outlying areas in East Berlin, you can drive along the wall for miles without noticing that it is something more than an ordinary part of the urban landscape.

'We are the people! We're staying here'

Just after the metaphorical fall of this wall, I visited an East Berlin friend on his side of the city. A non-party intellectual who has supported the demonstrations and opposed the regime throughout the current crisis, he had one word of advice: "Don't tear down the wall. We need it as a protective barrier. It should be permeable but it should stay up. One of the great mistakes in Berlin history was to tear down the customs wall in which the Brandenburg Gate was embedded in 1867. After that the tragedies of the modern age began."

A young professor from Leipzig had made a similar remark two months earlier. She described the wall as a dike against dangerous influences from the capitalist world. I had thought she was repeating a party line, but the same idea can be heard on East German television, in pubs, and in the streets now that the East Germans are debating their future openly and the wall has changed its nature.

Westerners commonly imagine that East Germans are hungering and thirsting for the chance to earn large salaries and to spend them on the consumer goods that are available in the West. Yet a more significant refrain was chanted by the hundreds of thousands who remained home, demonstrating in the streets of Leipzig, Dresden, and a dozen other cities for weeks before the storming of the wall: "We are the people! We're staying here!" Between 500,000 and a million people chanted that theme in the climactic demonstration of 4 November in East Berlin; not a nose was bloodied, not a window broken.

The demonstrations have operated as an Estates General in the streets, sapping legitimacy from the Party and transferring it to the people. In conquering the wall, the people brought that process to a climax. But then they faced a problem: what are they to do if nothing stands between them and the West?

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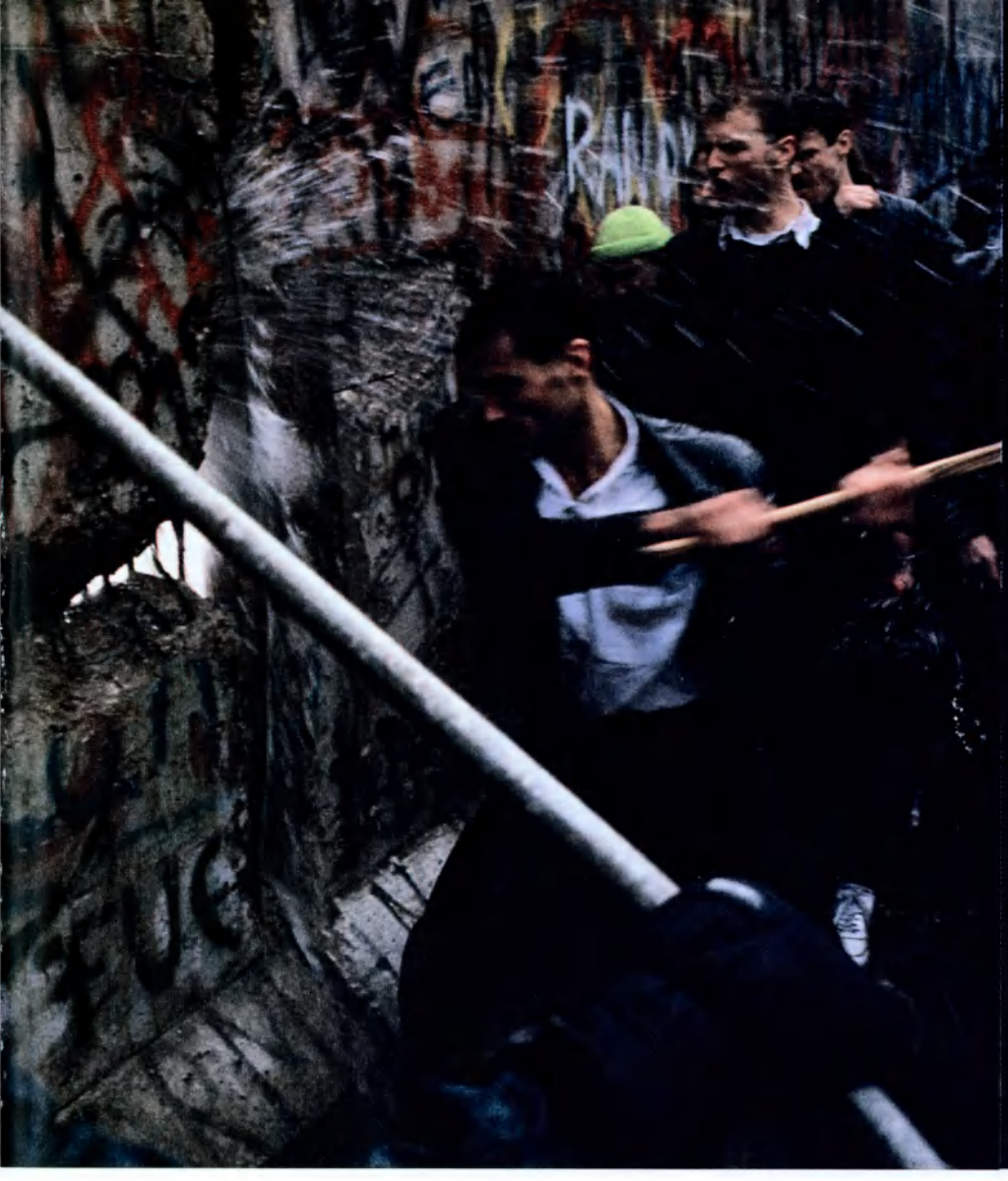


The wall

Stone after stone
your mighty bulk
will fall.
Stone after stone
the false
despotic
frontier
will yield.
We shall remove
all trace
of your ugliness.
The winter was long
but yet again
the dream of a people
has toppled walls.
Liberty
though a latecomer
always wins in the end.

Federico Mayor

'Charlie's retired. 10 Nov. 1989'

On the Western side, the wall carries its own commentary, because it has been covered with layers of graffiti for years. "Tear along dotted line"; "Make love not wall". Here the wall has been taken over by tourists, who often treat it as a neutral surface for spray paint: "Lisa ti amo"; or whose high-mindedness says little about the divisions of Berlin: "Essex University condemns all forms of political oppression".

In places the palimpsest reads like a dialogue, in which the present answers the past with a comforting reflection: the wall has fallen, even though it is standing before your eyes as a surface on which the writer sprays his assertion of its non-existence. "A pity that concrete doesn't burn." "It falls, though."... "This wall will fall." "We saw it fall, Nov. '89." The graffiti sound triumphant, even when they joke, as in this message sprayed near Checkpoint Charlie: "Charlie's retired. 10 Nov. 1989."

The messages are essentially the same: they distinguish between totalitarianism and liberty. The theme is reinforced by the Checkpoint Charlie Museum, which displays devices used to escape under, over, or through the wall, and by crosses set up opposite places where persons were gunned down while attempting to escape.

This sense of heroism and suffering is undercut by souvenir shops which sell wall postcards and wall trinkets in a kind of fairground that has grown up between the old Reichstag, which is now a museum, and the breach in the wall opened opposite Potsdamer Platz, which was once the busiest traffic centre in Europe and is now an enormous field covered with mud and weeds. The postcards were snapped up by the Ostlers who swarmed through the area after 9 November and who were fascinated by views of the wall that they had never seen. But the vendors had displayed the postcards on stands outside their shops, and the East Berliners, who had never seen goods exposed so openly, assumed they were handouts and walked off with them without paying.

To the Ku'damm and back

One of the radical groups in West Berlin tried to march against the flood carrying a banner which proclaimed "Your liberty is that of the West German banks". But the marchers were lost in the waves of Ostlers, who swept through the wall echoing the chant of the first wave, which

The Berlin wall around 1962.

arrived on Thursday: *Zum Ku'damm, zum Ku'damm und dann wieder zurück* (To the Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin's elegant shopping avenue, and then back again.) The *zurück* was the crucial term in the refrain, because the East Berliners did not come simply to buy up or sell out but rather to see the forbidden city with their own eyes and to return home.

The Federal Republic offered 100 marks (about $50) in "greeting money" to every visitor from East Germany, and many banks stayed open on Saturday and Sunday to provide cash. Individuals also stepped in to help. One West Berliner stood outside a break in the wall and handed out 50 mark notes, for as long as his supply held out, to every Easterner who came through. Another came across a teenage girl crying in front of the McDonald's on the Ku'damm. She said that all her life she had wanted to eat a McDonald's hamburger, and now she had no money. He pressed a 50 mark note into her hand and she disappeared, into paradise.

The incoming Ostlers collided with waves of well-wishers from the West, who thrust drinks into their hands, loaded them down with pizzas and sausages, took them for rides through residential neighbourhoods, and put them up overnight. Ostlers were given free rides on all buses and subways, reduced prices in restaurants and movie theatres, free admission to discotheques. They pressed their noses against store windows displaying fine clothing and Mercedes. And when they had some marks, they spent them—for the most part on tropical fruits unavailable in East Berlin; on toys, relatively shabby on the other side of the wall; on books, many of which had been forbidden; on Coca Cola; and on a wide variety of cosmetics, trinkets, and flowers.

Above all, the two populations of Berlin sought to make contact with one another. In exchanging hugs, drinks and flowers, they were performing a collective ritual. As the *Volksblatt* put it, "In the night when the gates opened, it seemed as though there were no more East Berliners and West Berliners. Everyone felt as though they belonged to a huge family, and everyone celebrated the festival accordingly".

Living in the shadow of the wall

To someone unfamiliar with Berlin, it may be hard to imagine how successfully the wall had divided the city. Soon after 1961, when the wall went up, the million or so inhabitants on the Western side and the two million or so in the East began to lose contact. By 1989, a whole generation had come of age within the shadow of the wall. Most of them never crossed it, even from West to East when that was allowed. They accepted the wall as a fact of life, as something inexorable, built into the landscape, which was there when they were born and would be there when they died. They left it to the tourists, took it for granted, forgot about it, or simply stopped seeing it.

Before the fall, an old woman was interviewed on her balcony, which overlooked the wall from the West. She spent hours every afternoon staring into no-man's-land. Why did she look so hard at the wall, day after day? the reporter asked, hoping to find some expression of Berlin's divided personality. "Oh, I'm not looking at the wall at all," she replied. "I watch the rabbits playing in no-man's-land." Many West Berliners did not see the wall until it ceased to exist.

Little by little West Berliners had come to regard the wall as a source of support. Thanks to its presence, the government in Bonn poured billions into Berlin, subsidizing everything from the Philharmonic orchestra to teenage jazz groups. A whole population of under-employed intellectuals grew up around the Free University, which now has about 60,000 students. As residents of West Berlin, they are exempt from the draft, and they also are able to drink beer and

A human tide flowing from East to West.

A fiery eruption of joy.

talk politics in pubs throughout the night; for West Berlin is the only place in the Federal Republic of Germany where the pubs can stay open past midnight, the only place where you can order breakfast in the afternoon. Many of these free-floating intellectuals became free-loaders. They lived off the wall; and they may face greater economic difficulties than the Berliners in the East.

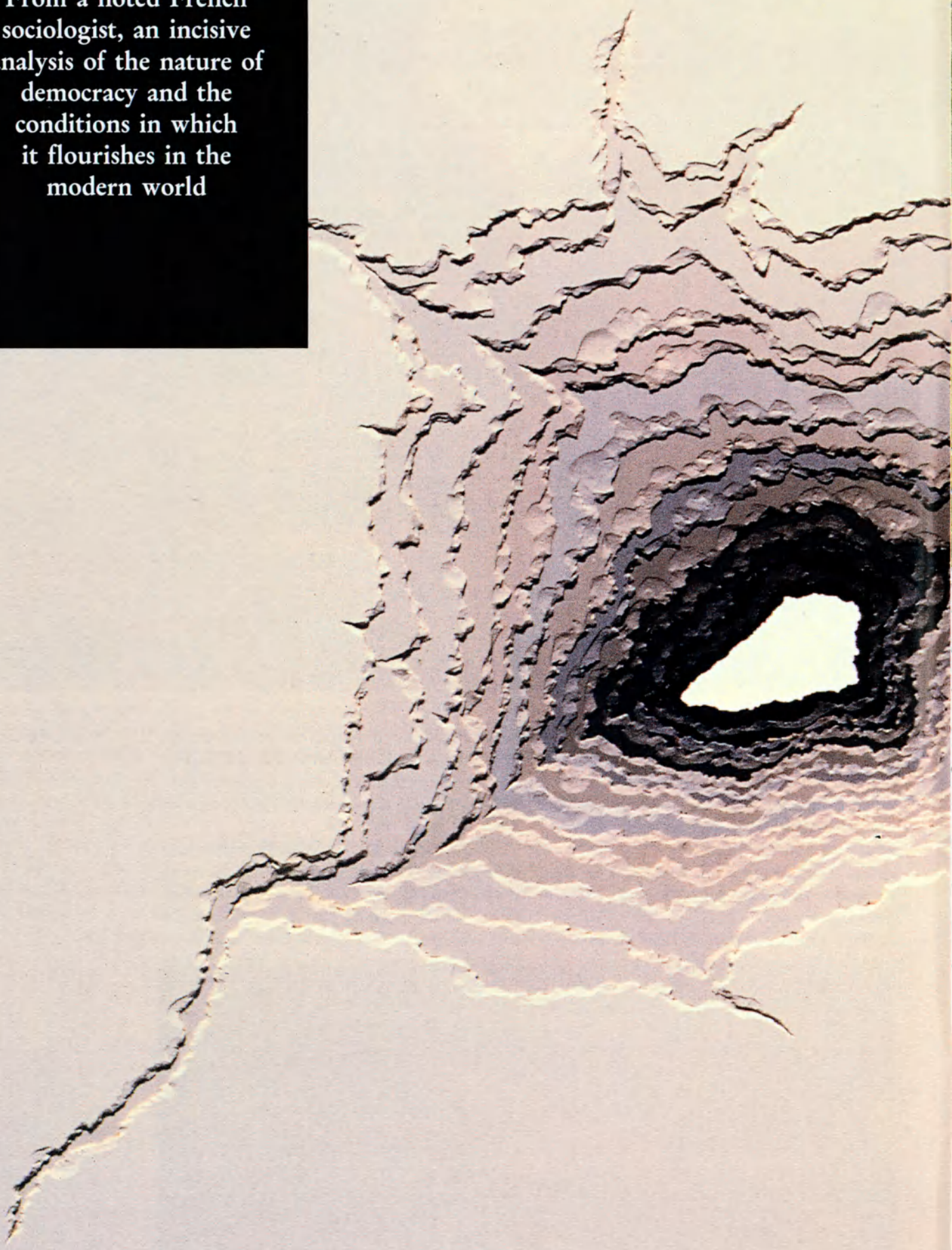
To Berliners, therefore, the wall means something very different from what it means outside the city. Most of them realize that their local barrier is bound up with larger divisions, the Oder-Neisse line in particular and the general dividing line between Warsaw Pact and NATO countries. Having gone to bed one day in a world with clearly defined boundaries, they woke up the next in a world without firm national borders, without balanced power blocs, and even without obvious demarcations of time, because it suddenly seemed possible to bring the curtain down on the Second World War. They are living a truism of anthropology: the collapse of boundaries can be deeply disturbing, a source of renewal but also a threat to a whole world-view.

The mood remains euphoric, nonetheless. In East Berlin especially, the idea has spread that in conquering the wall the people seized power. The demonstrations in the streets sapped the legitimacy of the regime. Combined with the subsequent haemorrhaging of the population across the borders, they brought the government down, without a shot fired.

We may never know the details of what happened inside the crumbling power structure of the German Democratic Republic. But whatever produced the occasion, the force that broke through the wall was there for all to see on the night of 9 November. It was the people of East Berlin, with nothing but their convictions, their discipline, and the power of their numbers. They took possession of the wall physically, by pouring through it, climbing on it, and chipping it apart. They did the same thing in West Berlin itself. They occupied space, swarming through the Ku'damm, filling the buses and pubs, parking their tiny Trabants on the noblest sidewalks, and returning triumphantly to the East with a flower for a girlfriend or a toy for an infant.

It was a magical moment, the possession of a city by its people. On Thursday 9 November, under a full moon, between the shadow of the Reichstag and the menacing bulk of the Brandenburg Gate, the people of Berlin danced on their wall, transforming the cruellest urban landscape into a scene of hilarity and hope. ■

From a noted French sociologist, an incisive analysis of the nature of democracy and the conditions in which it flourishes in the modern world



THE LONG ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

BY ALAIN TOURAINE

THE twentieth century has not been kind to democracy. For seventy-five years—from the beginning of the First World War in 1914, to the opening up of the Berlin wall in 1989—it seemed set to be a century of revolution, liberation and development. However, these objectives, on which so many hopes were pinned and which were the rallying points of so many powerful popular movements, are in their very essence anti-democratic, since they demand unity against a common enemy or a specific obstacle, whereas democracy is by nature pluralist.

This paradox is very hard for us to accept, especially if we live in what has been called the Third World. It is equally difficult, especially if we come from the Western world, to abandon the dream we nurtured for the twentieth century—that of seeing the spirit of democracy, born first in Britain, in the United States of America and in France, extending first to such neighbouring countries as Germany, Italy and Spain, then to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, to Latin America and, finally, to the rest of the world.

In the twentieth century, ideologists from the richer countries have declared that economic growth, political democracy and personal happiness go hand in hand, but this saccharine optimism has been brutally dispelled by historical reality. Weimar Germany, the country which perhaps more than any other was the standard-bearer of modernity, foundered and sank into nazism. At the same time, voices of protest in the colonized countries were a forceful reminder to the great Western nations that the methods with which they held sway over a large part of the globe were far from democratic.

On the other hand, the revolutionary anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist movements, created in the name of oppressed peoples and classes, were soon seen to have been imposed on half the countries of Europe by a foreign army and scarcely merited their self-assumed titles of "people's democracies". For their part, many of the regimes that emerged after decolonization also became dictatorships, often dependent upon foreign protectors. The poor countries followed not the road to liberty but that which led to authoritarian, totalitarian regimes. Again, some of the most developed countries swung over to the various forms of fascism which engulfed the world in the Second World War; they also imposed colonial regimes and encouraged social inequalities over large areas of the planet.

Today, this picture of the situation during the first half of the century certainly appears to be too bleak. Democracy has survived, it has taken root and spread in the West and has even regained much lost ground, particularly in Eastern Europe and Latin America. But serious reflection on the state of democracy must go further than such blandly euphoric observations. Democracy and development do not always go hand in hand; they may even advance in diametrically opposed

The Door Project (1985), detail of a work by SITE (Sculpture in the Environment), a group of New York architect-sculptors.

The Dance (right) and *The Slaves* (below) 1970, by the Senegalese artist Souley Keita.

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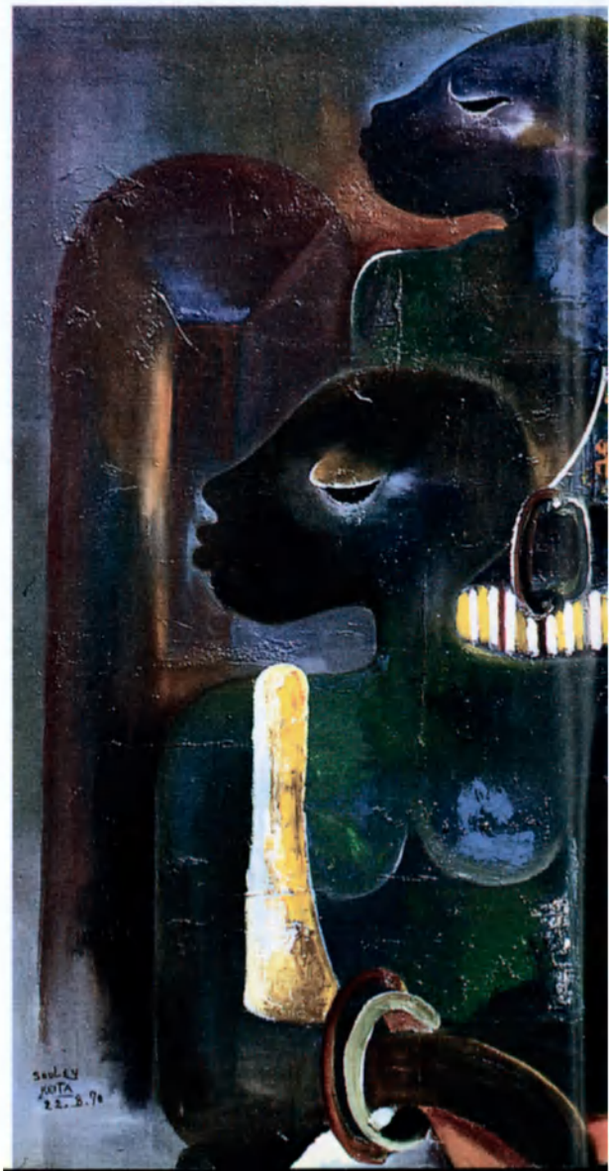
directions. This must be the starting point for a proper examination of the dramatic history of the twentieth century.

Defining democracy

Democracy is in no way associated with wealth or poverty; if we seek the elements that favour its advancement, we discover that it is very closely related to a country's capacity for endogenous development, that is to say, to the formation of active members of society who are motivated by the modern values of rationalism and individualism and who discuss among themselves questions about the allocation and use of the community's resources.

Democracy cannot be defined solely in terms of institutions, or, in a more limited way, of safeguards. There can certainly be no democracy without the free election of those who govern or without the right of the majority to remove from power those whom it has not invested with power or those from whom it has withdrawn its confidence. This is purely a matter of definition and there is no point in discussing democracy if by that word is meant anything other than the free choice of leaders by the people. What can be done is to identify and explain the reasons for the presence of this kind of political system. Here a distinction must be made between endogenous (democratic) and exogenous (voluntarist, anti-democratic) development.

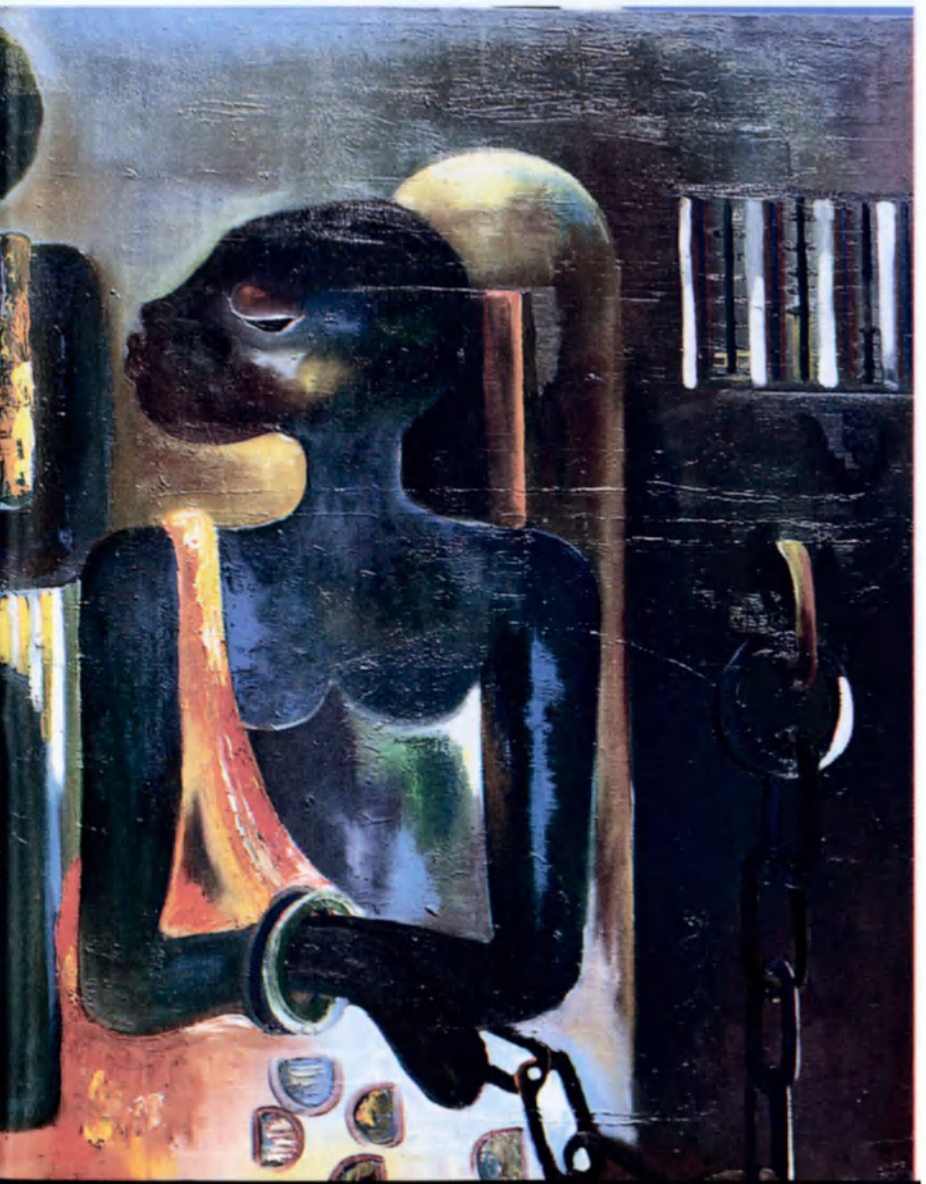
When a society comes up against insurmount-



able internal obstacles to its modernization, it has to mobilize, in both the literal and figurative senses of the word, behind leaders who plead the higher interest of the state or the nation and who seek to justify their actions in the name of science, history, a god, or the people. Development cannot be democratic in such a society if the old resists the new, for in this situation a vanguard or élite has to escape the pressure of the old order and lead it forcibly towards the future. Usually this involves the energetic mobilization of the community against enemies who are always portrayed as external enemies, whether they be a colonial power, great land-owners, traditional beliefs or forms of family organization. Defined in this way, voluntarist, exogenous development calls for national unity, whereas democracy requires plurality of opinion combined with a dual check on social conflict through appeals to rationality and freedom.

In what circumstances do development and democracy overlap? When can endogenous development be said to exist? As many authors have said since the eighteenth century and particularly since the time of the German economist and sociologist Max Weber, endogenous modernization presupposes a secular approach which detaches social life from a naturalistic or religious view of the universe, is based on practical reason, and makes respect for the individual the keystone of its ethic. It also presupposes the autonomy of civil society vis-à-vis the state; and this in turn—as many analysts, starting with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, have pointed out—implies a certain equality of conditions and thus the existence of an egalitarian principle, which may be religious or republican. Finally, it presupposes a structured civil society, whose members can be represented and therefore organized in such a way that political forces can be "representative"; this is the most visible and concrete expression of democracy.

Such a condensed analysis may seem too abstract, but, being confined to essentials, it clearly situates the problem of democracy and gives a precise meaning to the seemingly surprising proposition with which I began—that democracy and development may find themselves in mutual opposition.



Two worlds

The history of recent centuries has been that of a gradually widening division between a world capable of endogenous development, and therefore of democracy, and another world (dominated, moreover, by the first), engaged in exogenous development, along a traditionalist, populist or even national-revolutionary line traced out in authoritarian fashion by a ruling national or foreign élite.

In the first of these two worlds are to be found not only the central core of modern, democratic countries, but also a number of peripheral countries where development, and democracy, are fragile. Many countries generally considered to be in an intermediate position, such as India and some Latin American countries, in fact belong to this category.

The second of the two worlds consists of two distinct groups. On the one hand there are the modernizing, authoritarian states which proclaim the concepts of rationalization and secularization borrowed from the first world (for example, the communist countries). On the other hand there are states in which the ruling élite calls for unity and talks of the destiny of a people, a community, a nation (for example, the Third World countries). Thus we have four categories of countries grouped in two pairs: a central core of countries of endogenous development (group 1); modernizing, voluntarist, authoritarian countries (group 2); peripheral countries with limited endogenous development (group 3); the "new-community" countries (group 4).

This century has seen, first, an accelerating shift of initiative from the countries of group 1 to those of group 2 (beginning with the Soviet Revolution), then to the group 3 countries (with the accelerated modernization of the intermediate countries) and, finally, to the countries of group 4 (the real Third World countries, aroused by nationalistic, community, and even sometimes theocratic movements). Then, in a second phase,

came the almost simultaneous collapse of all the models of voluntarist, exogenous development, the triumph of the democracies, and the increasing attraction of the democratic model for the countries of groups 2 and 3 and even, in some cases, of group 4.

Once the opposition between democratic, endogenous development and authoritarian, exogenous development is recognized, it is easy to see that the most difficult task is to transform an exogenous impulse into an endogenous development mechanism. These terms may seem far from the historical realities as we perceive them; but they are not. Bismarck's Germany, the Italy built by Cavour, the Japan of the Meiji era and even, for a time, the Turkey of Kemal Ataturk, succeeded, following action initiated by the state, in creating a class of independent actors on the social scene—businessmen, trade unionists, administrators and scientists—thus combining the dynamism of modernization with an autonomous civil society and setting in motion what economists term "self-sustaining growth".

However, this process has only succeeded in societies in which major factors conducive to endogenous development already existed, as well as the preliminaries of modernization—a developing education system, freedom of thought, freedom of trade, and concentration of capital. The longer the path to be followed the greater the risk that the authoritarian mobilization of a society will become an end in itself and will be diverted into despotism with the creation of new inflexible structures and new privileges. In place of rationalism, planning and education comes the installation of a powerful nomenklatura, a rigid bureaucracy and the rejection of innovative ideas. The turnaround is even more marked where affirmation of nationhood becomes virtually the sole objective. Where an abundance of natural resources enables a country to survive severe economic disarray such nationalistic tendencies can take extreme forms.

The last third of this century, and in particular the period which began with the 1980s, has been dominated by these powerful regressive processes, which are finally leading on the one hand to the destruction of communist regimes and on the other to the deterioration of national liberation movements into corrupt, authoritarian regimes serving the interests of privileged clienteles.

Meanwhile, temporarily thrown off balance by the oil crises and by the rapid rise of real incomes and social benefits to the detriment of investment, the central core of democratic countries are again calling on their capacity for endogenous development. A wave of new technologies is appearing; education, research and, it must be admitted, armaments programmes are being strengthened.

Ways out of crisis

This turnaround is giving rise to a rebirth of the democratic theme and to the decline of the idea of revolution. In 1989 France celebrated the bicentenary of a Revolution which it saw as the forerunner of democracy, not as the harbinger of the Soviet Revolution.

In Latin America, the further south one looks the more the revolutionary ideal is giving way to aspirations for democracy. In Chile, the general desire to avoid a total rupture has led to the triumph of the more moderate elements of the opposition.

Liberté (1948), a tapestry designed by the French artist Jean Lurçat (1892-1966) incorporates a text by the poet Paul Eluard.

The Bars Come Down (1989), ink on paper, weaving and collage, by the Swiss artist Nicole Dufour.

It is in the East European countries, however, that the most spectacular turnaround is taking place. In the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, the democratic "repertoire"—to use Charles Tilly's apt expression—is supplanting the revolutionary menu. Violence in the streets, the storming of official buildings, the use of arms, is giving way to appeals for free elections and an absence of killing and vengeance. A society is rebuilding itself, while inflammatory appeals to the people, to the earthy forces of the proletariat, are heard no more. In the autumn of 1989, mankind lived through some of its finest hours and the destruction of the Berlin wall put an end to the era of revolutions which had begun two centuries earlier with the taking of the Bastille.

These were moving, inspiring sights for all those who believe that man creates his own history rather than being subject to the laws of fate, whether they be the laws of tradition or of what we call "progress". We must not, however, naively interpret this as a "happy ending" which will see all the nations which had lost their way return to the strait and narrow path of democratic modernization. It is true that these nations are emerging from a dictatorship which was supposed to be the dictatorship of the proletariat but which became that of a party and of an ideological machine and a police state. Yet this does not give them automatic entry into a democratic system. Other ways out are possible, and the deeper the political and economic crisis the more open they are.

The first way, other than that leading to democracy, will lead to chaos, if the decomposition of the old order prevents the formation of a new system. There would be a certain terrible logic in such an outcome for regimes that have prevented the formation of active members of society and thus leave behind them a social vacuum often destined to be filled with political infighting.

After the fall of its dictator, Romania, where a diversified, autonomous society has never existed and where power has been held by a succession of dictatorships and hereditary rulers, appeared to be on the brink of chaos.

The second way leads to an extreme form of economic liberalism. If there are no social actors, if the old regime has stifled the forces of liberation, if those responsible for running the economy are incapable of adapting to the demands of the market, many voices will be raised in favour of market forces as society's sole guide and for a massive injection of foreign capital, goods and methods. In 1990, when Poland adopted a policy of raw liberalization, prices soared and the standard of living of ordinary people collapsed yet the government became more popular than ever. It seemed as if the entire country was aware that the old conception of man must disappear so that a new kind of man could be born of the constraints and opportunities of the market.

In Latin America, this appears to be the most tempting policy. There is a call for a return to outward-looking development, for increasing the gap between a modern sector which can become integrated into the world market and an informal, marginal, poor sector. The most extreme example of this exaggerated duality is the trade in drugs, which is Latin America's biggest transnational undertaking and which, even if the farmers who earn more for growing coca are included, concentrates resources in the hands of a few, while the rest of the population is entrapped in crisis, violence and corruption resulting from the outflow of capital.

At the same time, the economies of the central core of democratic countries are experiencing a growing imbalance between capital movements and trade in goods and services, the former having become between twenty and fifty times more important than the latter.

A third way is that taken by societies whose

Computer Automatic Electronic Machine for Calculating (1978), acrylic on canvas by the Ethiopian artist Boghossian Skunder (Art Against Apartheid Collection, see page 38).

active members are defined not by their productive role but by their defence of a collective identity. Nationalist movements are arising on the ruins of voluntarist, modernizing, authoritarian policies. In the Soviet Union, Armenians and Azerbaijanis have become embroiled in a civil war which could be duplicated in other Soviet republics as well as outside the Soviet Union. Those who thought that nationalism was a spent force that would be replaced by class struggles within a modern economy were sadly mistaken.

The Austrian Marxists of the late nineteenth century and the Leninists themselves failed in their attempts to associate social with national struggles. Leninism-Maoism was the most powerful political movement of the mid-twentieth century, but the union of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles that it hoped to create under the leadership of a communist party was soon seen to be an artificial one. Revolutionary groups became bogged down in terrorist activities which were a feature of the break-up of Leninism in Uruguay and Argentina, as they were in Turkey and Iran.

In addition to these non-democratic paths there is also the possibility of a militaristic reaction on the part of threatened regimes which maintain themselves in power solely by repressive measures, thus ensuring their own eventual self-asphyxiation.

None of these possible solutions can be considered democratic, since, in each case, political choice disappears and the absolute power of the dictator is replaced by another form of absolute power, that of the centres of decision that govern the market, that of extreme nationalist groups or that of violence.

Enemies of democracy

While it may be true that democracy is not a form of society but a political regime, a government cannot be called democratic simply because it raises the standard of living, increases the level of school enrolment or the life expectancy of the population. There is no democracy if there is no choice between the representative groups within a local or national community. What are the rules of the game if there are neither players nor playing field?

Most of the world today is firmly attached to the democratic ideal, as is shown by the fall of military regimes in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile, the end of the monopoly of communist parties in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and, to some extent also, in the Soviet Union and Romania, as well as the disappearance of leftist tendencies opposed to the principle of parliamentary elections in the Western countries.

All these developments are in conformity with the general principles on the basis of which I have attempted to define democracy—the recognized existence of a society not subject to absolute

state power and as little segmented and hierarchically arranged as possible; the recognition of rationalization as a key factor in social conflicts which should combine opposition of interests or ideas with the notion of the general interest; and acceptance of the ethical principle of the absolute right of individuals to the widest possible freedom of belief and action.

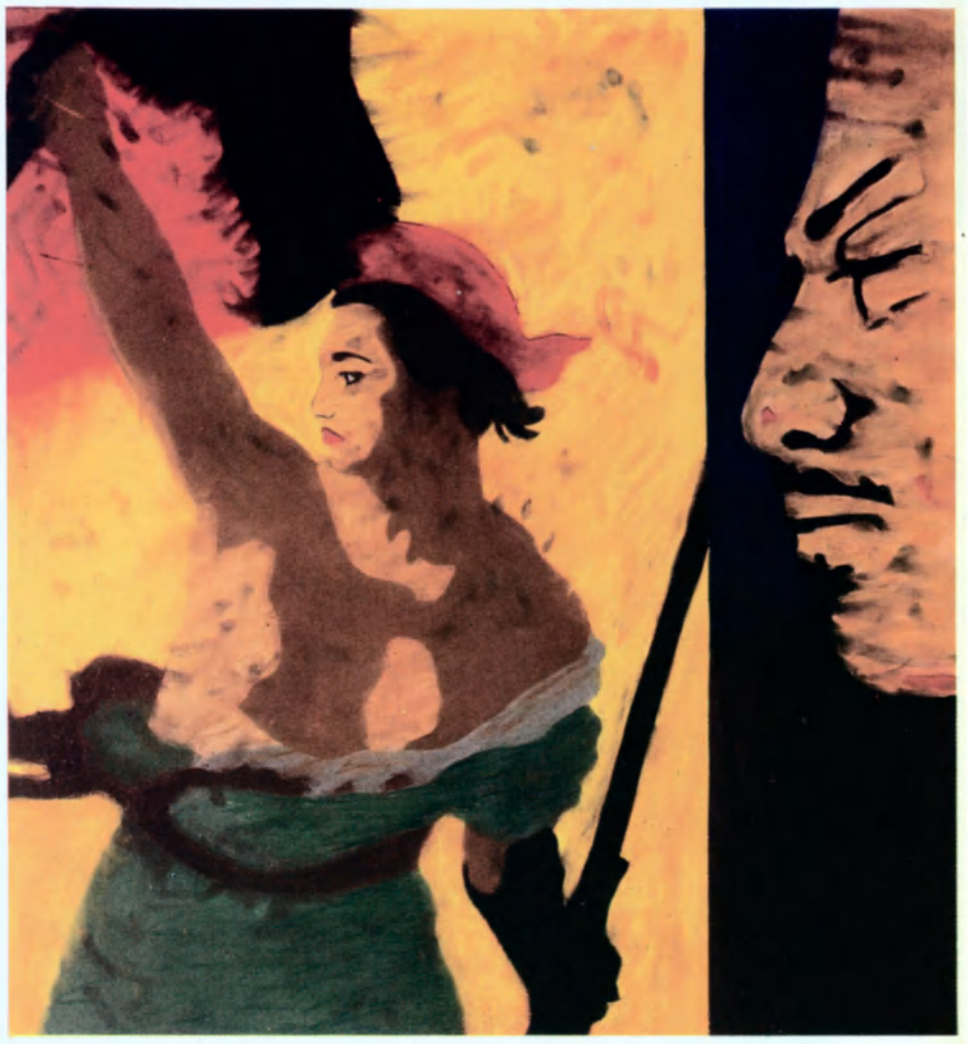
Political philosophers have long sought a sufficient basis for democracy in institutional arrangements—free elections, the separation of powers, the absence of personal privilege—but these are descriptions of democratic institutions rather than an analysis of the fundamentals of democracy. What I am showing here is that the existence of democracy depends first of all upon a double limitation of political and social power by acknowledgement of rationality and its constraints and by reference to some form of natural law. Democracy also requires the greatest possible social integration and, at the same time, the existence of groups of ideas and interests which can be represented.

In other words, social and cultural segmentation are just as much enemies of democracy as are an overriding appeal to a unifying principle or the subordination of society to a voluntarist state which itself takes the place of the active members of that society.

The need for active participation in public life

All the prerequisites for the existence of democracy that have just been mentioned are of a similar nature. Democracy is possible in so far as the population of a country constitutes a politically active whole. It is weakened or disappears where political choices are determined by a non-social logic—loyalty to a national spirit, the integration of a community, the will of a ruler, even modernization itself. Those who equate democracy with a market economy are just as mistaken as those who qualify as democratic a regime that emerges from a revolution or a national liberation movement supported by the majority of the population. Where there is much abstention from political life, where national unity is undermined by strongly marked ethnic, regional, language, religious or life-style differences, or where there is great social inequality, it is difficult to form a politically active system, a forum for debate and free political institutions.

Of course, we must not confuse countries that are less than perfect democracies with those that are dragged down into chaos and disarray or with those that overtly sanction forms of discrimination or segregation. The fall of a dictatorship does not automatically entail the installation of a democracy; this depends primarily on the democratic spirit, on the ability and the desire to participate, through free and representative institutions, in the creation and application of the law by citizens and under their control.



Libertad y las Americas (1986), pastel on paper by the American artist Rupert Garcia. Inspired by Delacroix, the allegorical figure of Liberty leading the People is here transposed to the context of the Americas.

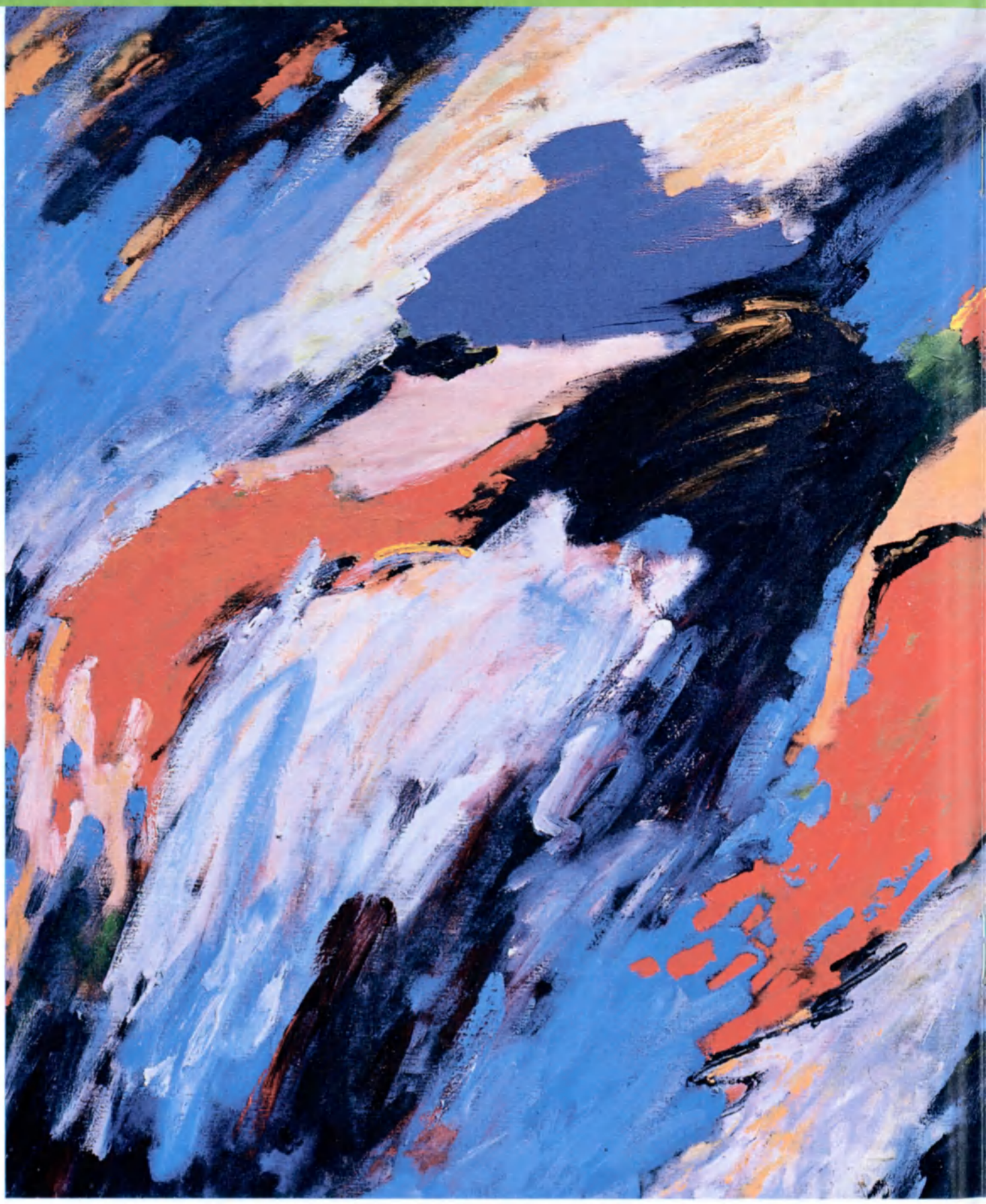
How far we are from those anti-social theories of democracy which explain democracy in the wealth of a nation, in its beliefs or even in its size. How urgent it is to seek every possible means to increase political activity and the ability to debate and make choices and to combine diversity of interests with social integration.

We have learned in the last few years, and even more clearly in the last few months, that democracy is more opposed to than associated with revolution, that it requires a great capacity for endogenous modernization and that, if it is to be strong, it must reduce social and cultural gaps, but we are still not sufficiently convinced that it requires above all a strong participation in public life.

Some are even tempted to support the notion that political passion is a threat to democracy and that a degree of apathy contributes to the smooth running of institutions. This idea is as unacceptable as the opposing viewpoint which confuses democracy with mass demonstrations, for it has the effect of reducing democracy to freedom for those who play an active role in economic life. There is, in fact, no democracy where political life is subject to any logic other than its own. Democracy is based on the most active possible participation by the greatest possible number of people in the making and application of political decisions. ■

BY OCTAVIO PAZ

IRONY AND



COMPASSION

The celebrated Mexican writer urges vigilance in the face of growing bureaucratization and despotic and intolerant doctrines of all kinds

WE are living at a particularly difficult time, a time when there is an intellectual vacuum in the world of political philosophy. The collapse of the great systems constructed in the last century is coinciding with the appearance throughout the world of political and economic institutions which constitute a new social group, a class which, for want of a more accurate term, we call a "bureaucracy".

In some countries, this bureaucracy is identified with an ideology or a state. Elsewhere, if the political and technocratic bureaucracy plays a decisive role, as it does in Mexico for example, its power is far from being absolute. This new class is universal: it has invested and invaded the great capitalist enterprises of the West and Japan, and the political regimes of Eastern Europe, not to mention powerful institutions such as the CIA, and the governments of some developing countries.

The vacuum in political and social ideas is a result of twentieth-century history. It is an aspect of the great crisis of modern post-industrial civilization. Until the 1930s many people, including myself, thought that only the socialist revolution could resolve the contradictions in our societies. But since then we have seen the failure of the experiment which began with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. It has been a social failure, because it has been unable to provide freedom and equality; it has been an economic failure because the wealth that was supposed to be created did not materialize. The only triumph was political or, rather, military.

The end of ideology

The idea of revolution, however, has received a serious blow and has lost almost all its appeal, notably in the developed countries. Even in Mexico, where the intellectuals—the heirs of the clerics and courtiers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—are singularly impervious to criticism, the left has begun a process of ideological detoxification. But the disappearance of utopian ideology which is noticeable even in the

Revolution, oil on canvas by the contemporary Cuban artist Gilberto Frometa Fernandez.

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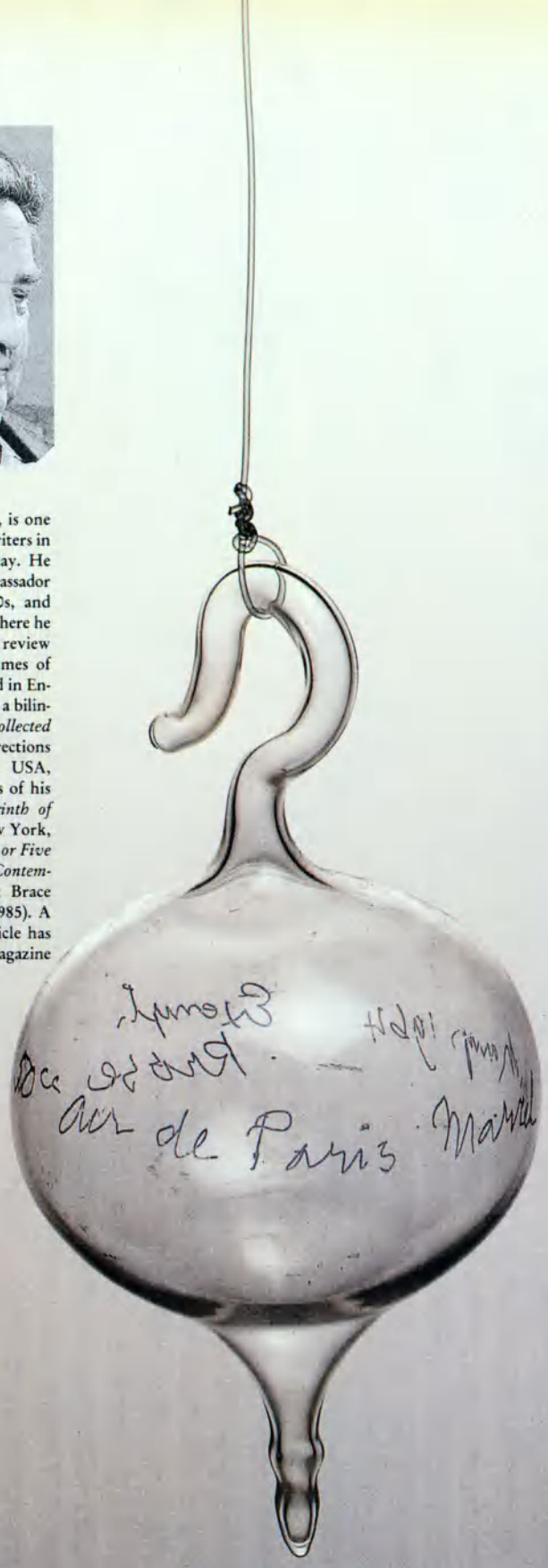
Mexican poet and essayist, is one of the most outstanding writers in the Spanish language today. He served as his country's ambassador to India during the 1960s, and now lives in Mexico City where he is director of the monthly review *Vuelta*. Many of his volumes of poetry have been published in English translation, including a bilingual edition of *The Collected Poems, 1957-1987* (New Directions Publishing Corporation, USA, 1987). English translations of his essays include *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Grove Press, New York, 1985) and *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds: Reflections on Contemporary History* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1985). A longer version of this article has appeared in the Japanese magazine *Ichiko* (Tokyo).



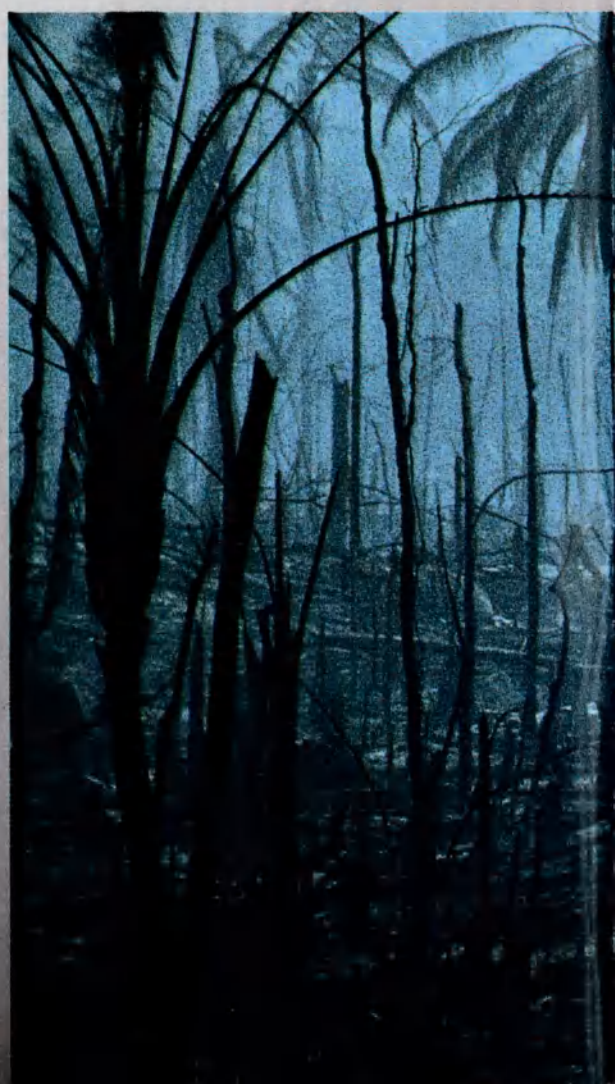
Above right, *Air de Paris* (1919) by Marcel Duchamp. Right, bronze head of Buddha. Ayuthia school, Thailand, (14th century). Opposite page above, mushroom cloud after an atomic test explosion. Opposite page below, a tract of tropical forest devastated by fire.

USSR, through the constructive reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev, does not mean the birth of a new political philosophy. As far as social ideals and collective morality are concerned, there is a gaping void. Peoples and states are drifting.

The moral criticism of capitalism by Marx and the anarchists is still largely valid. Similarly, the liberal critique of despotism and state socialism, what Engels called "cartel socialism", is as relevant as ever. The same could be said of the critique of the iniquities of the modern world made by Christianity and other religions. But the foundations of the political ideologies which have motivated twentieth-century man—socialism, liberalism and others—have been relegated to the sidelines since the Second World War.

Today we are confronted with the perils of nuclear holocaust and environmental degradation, which threaten world peace and the very survival of the human race. Neither of these two scourges can be imputed to the injustices of capitalism or the evils of socialism: they both result from the very nature of modern societies. The bomb and the pollution of the planet are the result of technological progress and not of a particular ideology. Reality has reduced ideology to rubble.

Without wishing to make prophecies, we can say that in this great historical vacuum democracy is the only regime which is still showing signs of life. But democracy is not a panacea. It is a



form of conviviality, a system for preventing people from killing each other, for ensuring that the reins of government change hands peacefully, and for enabling heads of state to come to power via the ballot-box. Democracy teaches us to live together and nothing else. I hope that one day, a day that I shall perhaps never see since I am seventy-five years old, a new form of political thought will emerge and reconcile the liberal and the socialist traditions.

In the Mexican intellectual microcosm, all that can be done at present is blow away the dust and the cobwebs, open the windows and let in some light, maintain a critical approach and a healthy scepticism of easy solutions. Irony is one ingredient in criticism, but it is also born of disenchantment. We belong to a disenchanted generation. And we also lack something of imagination and compassion.

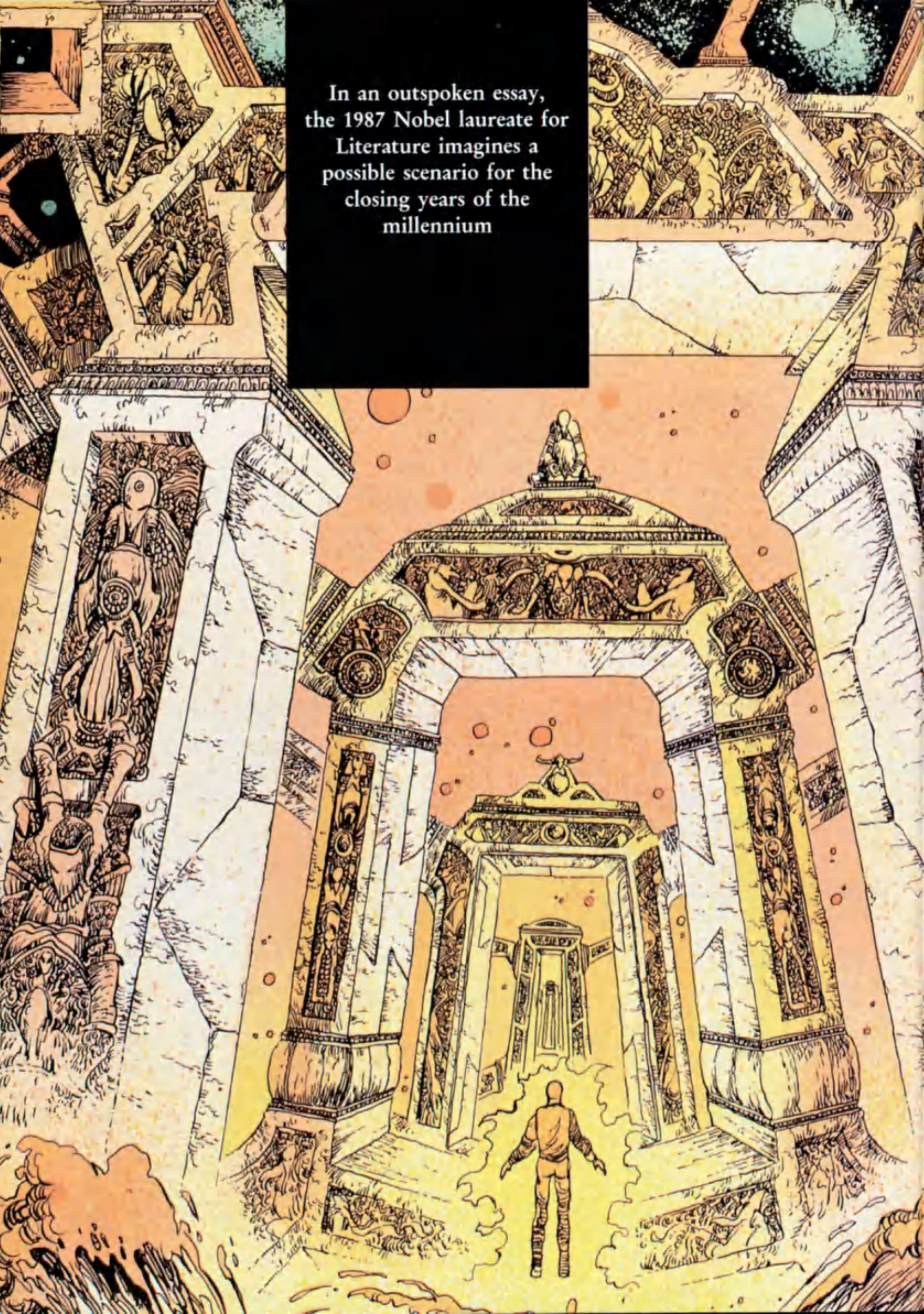
I have used the word irony in the sense in which it was used by the French artist Marcel Duchamp—an irony which goes beyond irony and cancels itself out by mocking itself. Irony is subjective, the reaction of the self to the stupid or criminal seriousness of the objective world. The ironical man laughs at others but also at himself: "meta-irony" consists in going further than the dialogue with the self, in mocking the self which mocks the world. If irony is cruel, meta-irony dissolves the cruelty.

Transposing these aesthetic ideas to morality and politics, I believe that the political writer should show a little irony in his dealings with himself and others—he should be less sure of himself, know that he does not possess infallible recipes, and recognize that there are no absolute truths. And through the practice of meta-irony, keep a hold on compassion and pity.

The vile dictatorships which we have endured in the twentieth century have been rooted in merciless ideologies. I can accept that many of them, as in the case of Stalin, were perversions of altruistic doctrines, but it must also be admitted that these doctrines contained the seeds of despotism and intolerance.

In their profound wisdom, the theologians of old considered pride to be the sin of Satan. Among mankind, this sin is born of the claim to possess absolute truth. It is an evil which has poisoned the twentieth century in the guise of science and philosophy.

Criticism is the only antidote to this moral poison. When people understand that they do not possess the absolute truth and that all truths, especially political truths, are relative, then there is room for irony and pity—towards others and towards themselves. This is what our century lacks—a resurrection of pity. One of the most beautiful features of Buddhism is that Buddhist sages are always smiling. And their smile expresses irony and pity.... The smile of the Buddhist sages should be introduced into politics. ■


In an outspoken essay, the 1987 Nobel laureate for Literature imagines a possible scenario for the closing years of the millennium

THE VIEW FROM THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

BY JOSEPH BRODSKY

CONVERSATION about the weather only really becomes interesting, the Polish humorist Stanislaw J. Lec once said, when the first signs of the end of the world start to appear. The same might well be said of the future—there is little point in talking about it except when important chronological events are looming, for chronology is the daughter of eschatology.

Both chronology and eschatology are born of the inability of homo sapiens to master intellectually the phenomenon of time. Man does his best to domesticate this phenomenon and make it comply with his rational faculties, which are themselves its offspring. Hence all our devices for measuring time—our speedometers, calendars, months, years, decades, centuries and millennia. Hence too our linear concept of time and its division into past, present and future.

The paradox of such a division, especially in relation to the future, is that it is based on the alternation of day and night, which results from the rotation of the planet around its own axis and around the sun in a never-ending cycle. An earth-dweller might be compared with a child on a merry-go-round who is absolutely certain that he and his horse are not trotting where he mounted it but in some vast beyond. The only difference is that our merry-go-round is in perpetual motion and never stops.

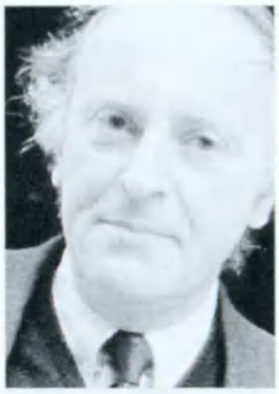
It is to movement, cyclical though it may be, that the earth-dweller tends to relate all kinds of change—change of place, of flora and fauna, of circumstances, of state of mind. This is because man operates on a very small scale, travelling not from one star to another, but from doorway to doorway. It is the different appearance of the doors, the diversity of the occupants of a building or of the passers-by, that create a feeling of progression and lead him to see movement itself as the source of a new quality.

That, in reality, is what the future is—the notion of something qualitatively new. And chronology is like the numbers of the houses in a long street leading towards this qualitatively new something. The vanishing point of this street, this avenue, this perspective, is lost in the mists of grammar, since in most languages, at least in most Indo-European languages, the relationship between future time and the verbal expression of it has always been somewhat strained. This reflects the contradiction between man's awareness of his biologically imposed limitations and the relatively boundless nature of his speculative capacities.

Man's way of thinking, in short, has a marked tendency towards the undefined, or the utopian, as it is more usually termed. This quality finds full expression both in the workings of the memory and in those of the imagination. Speculation about the future provides an opportunity for the expression and satisfaction of imaginative thought. The future is always, at the very least, the utopia of a specific person. When attempts to give it a reality come up against the grammatical difficulties mentioned above, chronology comes to the rescue.

Like any transposition of ordinary speech into the language of figures, chronology tends to simplify the problem. In this context the future takes on the aspect of the infinite in mathematics; the figures merely get larger, forming a link between a biologically limited body and a vanishing point that is physically inaccessible but which the mind can envisage. Whenever we come to a round figure (a date), whether it be the end of a decade, a century or a millennium, society,

Illustration by Philippe Druillet for a French edition of *Demons and Marvels* by the American author H. P. Lovecraft (1890-1937), a master of fantasy literature.



JOSEPH BRODSKY, Russian-born poet and essayist, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1987. In 1964 he was charged in the Soviet Union with being a social parasite and sentenced to five years' internal exile and compulsory labour. He was released in 1966, and since 1972 has lived in the United States, where he is currently professor of literature at Mount Holyoke College. His publications in English include *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (Penguin, London, 1987), *A Part of Speech: Verse 1972-76* (Oxford University Press/Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 1980), and *To Urania: Selected Poems, 1965-85* (Penguin, London, 1988).

without really knowing why, enters a period of effervescence and, myopic though it is by nature, indulges in an orgy of peering into the distance and speculation about world change. This phenomenon is known as millenarianism.

Since chronology itself is non-semantic, a chronological event is, in fact, a non- or an anti-event. The future, that is to say the qualitatively new, bursts upon the life of an individual or nation without warning, although it seems to have a predilection for odd numbers (1939, for example). In most cases it comes in the guise of a scientific discovery, a technological innovation, war, or an impoverishment of the language. Only very rarely does it take the form of social change, perhaps because the possibilities in that field are extremely limited; after all, the only choice is between various shades of autocracy or democracy.

The most common guise in which the future makes its appearance is that of acceleration—in the speed of locomotion, in musical rhythms or in new weapons systems. The latter presuppose a larger number of objects to be destroyed, while the former usually herald a way of looking at the world which is compatible with the act of pulling a trigger or, rather, of pressing a button. In this century, the future may be said to have begun with the first rhythms of boogie-woogie, which abolished forever the notion of quiet little solos, thus paralleling the fate of the notion of personal tragedy in the perspective of a nuclear catastrophe. The twenty-first century can be said to have burst upon our time with the appearance of remote-control devices for changing from one television channel to another. Flickering scenes of angry crowds alternating on the screen with advertisements for orange juice or new cars seem like a prophetic reflection of our psychological landscape. The rapidity with which new objects are brought to our attention prepares the mind for the demographic reality of the chronological perspective we call the future.

In fact, it is the chronological perspective itself that intrudes on the contemporary outlook. Born of our thought faculties, the future makes every effort to arrive at the earliest possible moment so as to make a better match between our powers of imagination and reality, and to reconcile the infinite with the finite and utopias with their creators. As a general rule, the irruption of the future into the present is felt as being a source of discomfort, if not of downright discouragement. It might be said that the voice of the future can be heard in almost everything that we regard as aggressive or unpleasant, since it is trying to carve a place for itself in the present. All the betrayals of which we are the victims, or which we ourselves commit, are also the voice of the future in the present. This is not only because betrayals are always committed in the name of the future, never of the past or the present, but also because they bring into our lives something new—a word which is, after all, synonymous with the future.

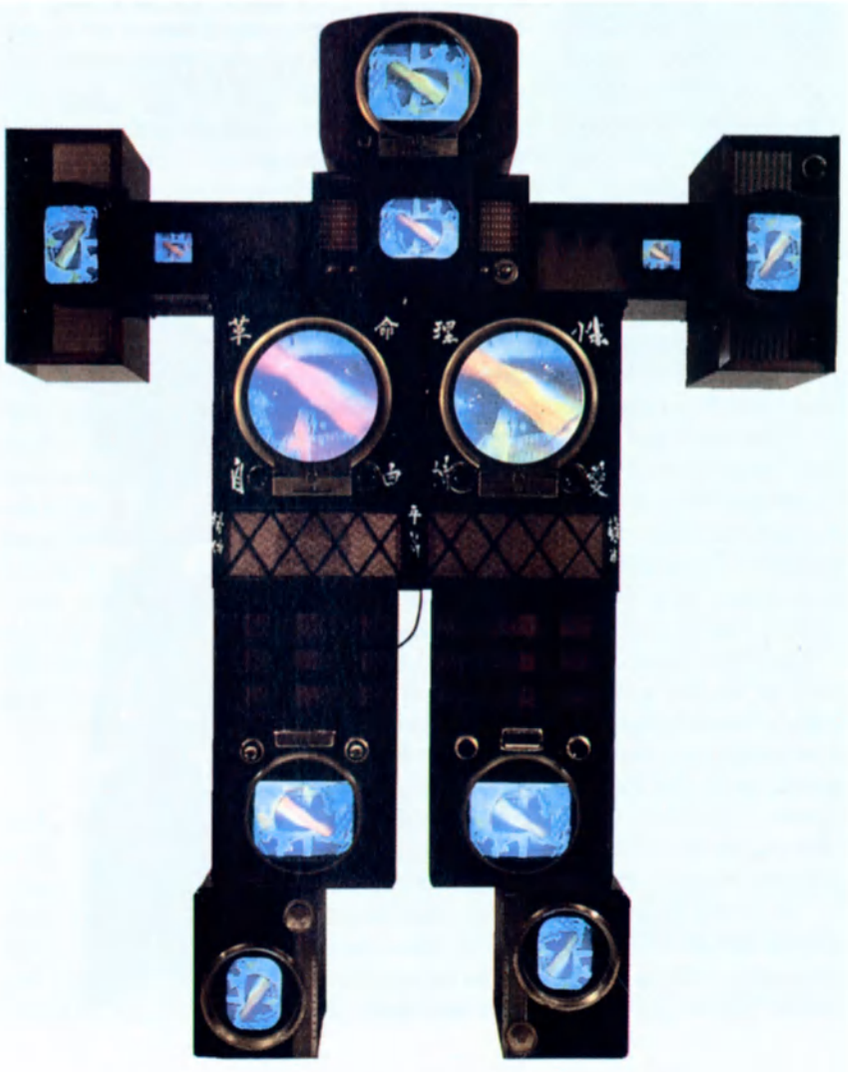
Talking about the future, therefore, is psychologically unbearable and philosophically both intolerable and inconceivable. If the future means anything, it means our own absence. The first thing we shall discover when we look closely at

the future is our non-existence there. The notion of non-existence impels us either to adopt a religious attitude or turns us back to our own realities, making us retreat from the language of figures into that of semantics and from the chronological vanishing point to our own doorstep. With those who dwell in this house we can at least speak of the future in purely political terms and without looking too far ahead. What follows, therefore, are a few words on the decade ahead from a man who still lives in this house—the monologue of an inhabitant of the present.

A world in the throes of change

The ten years that remain before the beginning of the third millennium will undoubtedly give rise to a millenarian view of the world which, encouraged by its inevitable promotion by the media, will quickly become epidemic. It will probably take the form of ecological radicalism with a strong tinge of common-or-garden eschatology. The feeling that the end—of the century, of the millennium, of the established order of things—is nigh, coupled with increasingly frequent ecological catastrophes, may well take lethal or suicidal forms. The horror of our own mortality is never more effectively stifled than when the clamour of lamentations about universal destruction rings in our ears.

Opposite page, *Winds* (1985), acrylic on paper by the Russian artist Yury Mirakov. Below, *Danton* (1989), a "robot-sculpture" constructed from old television sets by the Korean artist Nam June Paik.



To this must be added the problems associated with a gigantic demographic explosion, as a result of which a high proportion of those now experiencing a period of relative well-being will find themselves among the world's excluded. The overriding need for a common denominator, the absence of any even slightly convincing or accessible ideology and, above all, the anti-individualist sentiment of an overpopulated world may well bring together under the banner of ecology the most diverse groups and types of discontent. The end of a century, and even more the end of a millennium, is always marked by the notion of a forthcoming change in the world order. The more unintelligible the notion, the more attractive it is. We can always take consolation from the thought that a new Thomas Müntzer* will speak but one language, probably European, and that this, coupled with geographical constraints, will somewhat limit the scope of national or international psychosis and prevent it from becoming universal.

Leaving aside this desire to reorganize the world, the catastrophism inherent in millenarian thought could find expression in religious or ethnic wars. By about the year 2000, what is referred to as the white race will account for only 11 per cent of the world's population. It is not unimaginable that the radical wing of the Muslim world will come into confrontation with what remains of Christian civilization. Conflicts of this kind seem inevitable if only because the more complex the picture presented by reality, the greater the temptation to simplify it.

Such conflicts will inevitably be bloody, but temporary. However, the equivalent of a third world war looms in the prospect of an economic war probably situated in western Eurasia and, perhaps, the United States of America. The absence of international anti-trust regulations, particularly in banking, makes it possible to foresee a level of competition that nothing, absolutely nothing, will be able to curb, a situation in which no holds will be barred and the goal will be dominance. The battles in such a war will be supra-national in character, but the victory will always be national—it will go to the nation to which the victor belongs.

Germany and Japan will doubtless be involved. The reunification of Germany, if it comes about—on the same principle of simplifying complexities—will establish in the heart of Europe a financial and industrial monster without equal. Financial power usually takes various forms of expansion—economic, political and cultural. Unlike its predecessors, the new Reich will, for purely hedonistic reasons, embark upon a *Drang nach Süden*, a "Drive to the South". Already, 90 per cent of the inhabitants of the island of Ischia speak German fluently. Buying is simpler than

* Thomas Müntzer (d. 1525). German priest and radical reformer.

killing. As the descendants of Wotan have at last come to understand, indebtedness is a much surer method of occupation than an army garrison.

The only means whereby Europe can defend itself against this kind of expansion could be to form alliances or financial and political blocs. No country alone will be able to stand up to the competition of the German giant. The most reasonable thing to do would be to establish such blocs on cultural or historical bases. There might, for example, be a financial and political alliance between Italy, Spain and France, or between the present Comecon countries. One might also envisage groupings such as that of the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom with the Benelux countries. The project for a united Europe is not just a variation of such alliances. On the contrary, it is the *autobahn*, the highway that will enable Germany, whether reunited or not, to pursue the objective, whether consciously or not, towards which its rising financial power is impelling it.

There is little hope that such alliances will materialize. If they are to be made, it will have to be before 1995, since, if the forecasters are to be believed, Germany, whether reunited or not, will by then have achieved so great an economic superiority over its European partners that the expansion mentioned above will have become both inevitable and irreversible.

A similar situation is likely to develop in the East for Japan. However, the formation of opposing blocs is even more hypothetical than in Europe, especially since the Japanese expansionist drive is directed towards the east and west rather the south. It is even conceivable that a Berlin-Tokyo financial and political axis might be established. Today, the Land of the Rising Sun is acting in a manner increasingly reminiscent of that adopted by another island empire on which, fifty years ago, the sun never set.

The outlook for 1995

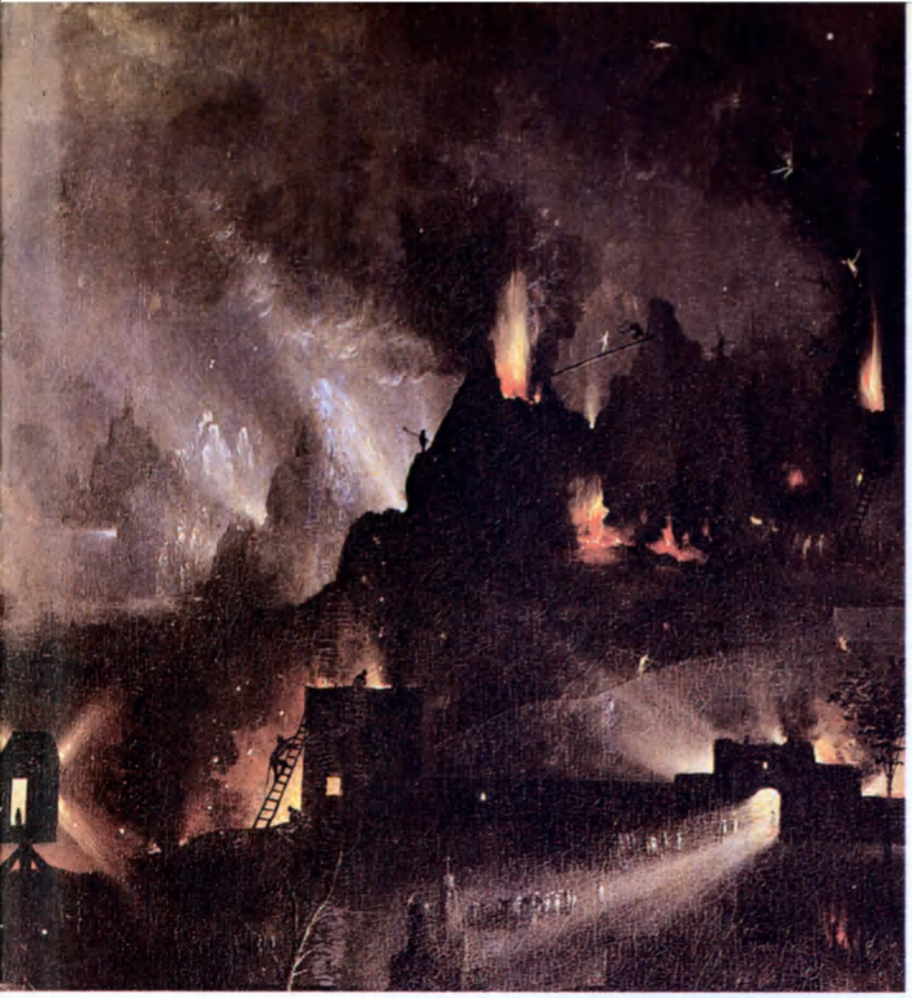
As far as one can judge, around 1995, the world, with or without blocs, will be in much the same situation as it was in 1905. Geography, or at least the geography of Europe, offers history only a limited number of possible variants, and this number is inversely proportional to the rate of population growth. It is very likely that, once liberated from the encumbrance of communism, the countries of Eastern Europe (territorially equivalent to the former Austro-Hungarian Empire) will find themselves as debtor nations. France, Italy, Spain and Portugal will, of course, retain their administrative and territorial integrity, but in political terms they may well be subject to a certain "Finlandization" in relation to Germany. The same will be true in northern Europe, although for ethnic reasons the situation will be less evident. The United Kingdom and the Balkan countries, involved as they are in ethnic conflicts and contradictions, will doubtless be less affected by these changes. The United States will doubtless experience a similar situation which, coupled with economic problems, might well lead it back to a policy of relative isolationism.

In Russia too the year 1995, like the year 1990, will be reminiscent of the year 1905. It will be a period devoted to the elaboration of new constitutional norms and the struggle to maintain the country intact. It will not matter much who is head of state. It will probably be the same man as today, unless he loses his grip or succumbs to the task in some other manner. He is more likely to end up in this fashion than to be the victim of a power struggle, since it is difficult to imagine that anyone would lay claim to power over the chaos and contradictions to which the country will be subject during the coming decade.

This chaos and these contradictions are, in fact, a guarantee of the stability of a power that is attempting to create order out of chaos and to find solutions to problems. The range of problems facing the Soviet head of state is enormous, since it is directly proportionate to the seventy-year period which gave birth to them. Today they have become organic and any attempt to find a radical solution to them can only be tautological, plunging the country back into the seventy-year period that engendered the problems in the first place. Their solution requires a qualitatively different approach, the elaboration of which will be enough to keep the country occupied over the years to come.

It is very likely that problems created over several decades will in turn take several decades to resolve. This is the case, however much we would like things to be otherwise. Despite all

Above, detail of *Hell*, from the right-hand wing of a triptych by Hiëronymus Bosch (c. 1450s-1516). Below, enamel on wood totem (1983) by the American artist Keith Haring. Opposite page, cooling tower at a nuclear power plant.



imaginable democratic reforms, the Russia of 1995 is likely to be in a state of chronic crisis, the sole argument in its defence being its organic nature. Paradoxical though it may seem, what is happening in the Soviet Union today fascinates us by the extraordinary impression it gives of existential truth—nobody knows how to live. Any political system, including democracy, provides a means of escape from this truth. It is to the credit of the present Soviet government that it is not attempting or is not in a position to simplify, either for itself or for its citizens, the complex existential pattern with which it is faced.

However this may be, the role of Russia in international relations, especially within Europe, will bear much the same weight as it did in 1905. Whoever comes to power in the Soviet Union in the near future will inherit problems rather than solutions. The fact that the present head of state may not be universally approved of by the people is to his credit. This disaffection is that felt by a patient towards his doctor and is evidence that the country is convalescing, at least morally. Only a demagogue could hope to retain the affection of a people consisting of almost 300 million individuals.

A tropical fever

As far as one can judge, this state of chronic crisis is likely to become the norm of political and economic life more or less everywhere. The days of clear, radical solutions to national and international problems, including the use of armed force, and the era of consensus and unanimity on all political and economic questions, are over. And with current population growth, democratic processes themselves are being modified. The weight of the masses involved in politics is modifying the very concept of a minority, since a minority can consist of a few dozen or, in the case of a democratized China, hundreds of millions of individuals.

This is why no revolution, even in a relatively small country, will be decisive and, more important still, no ideology will be dominant. Revolutions, should there be any, will not be linked to this or that philosophical doctrine, since none of them will enjoy absolute authority, but will erupt in a spontaneous, almost hysterical fashion. Those who take over the reins of power will not be able to hold them for long, despite the new means that will be at their disposal to control peoples. What will be called revolutions or revolutionary changes will be no more than stages in the chronic crisis already mentioned.

The countries of Latin America and Africa will be the first to be affected. In the coming decade it is likely that, in the eyes of the so-called civilized West, these geographical areas will not have the same political importance. In a sense, these countries will be the victims of the changes that have occurred in Eastern Europe, which promise to offer the West a source of cheap, qualified labour. The industrially advanced countries of the West will concentrate their political and financial attention on Eastern Europe to the detriment of Third World countries. Having ceased to be the arena for superpower rivalries, Africa in particular will, more than today, be exposed to hunger and epidemics, as well, perhaps, as to more deliberate attempts to adapt political forms copied from abroad to its own traditions. Monstrous as such transformations may turn out to be, they seem to signal the end of the period of decolonization. At the same time, the West will be able to justify its actions by pointing out that it has transferred its interest from Third World countries to other parts of Eurasia.

This change of direction will not, of course, be definitive. Poverty and more especially overpopulation in the Third World will continue to offer a tempting source of cheap labour and commercial opportunities. During the coming decade, however, the industrially developed countries, subject to waves of immigration and a considerable increase in their own populations, will find themselves in their turn facing conditions similar to those faced by their former protégés. In a sense, this phenomenon of chronic crisis with its alternations between severity and remission resembles a tropical fever which the northern hemisphere has caught and which it must suffer in retribution for what it has done in the southern hemisphere.

If only half the propositions expounded here prove to be true, the coming decade will be that of a new egalitarianism. Traditional ideas about the unique nature of national, ethnic and cultural

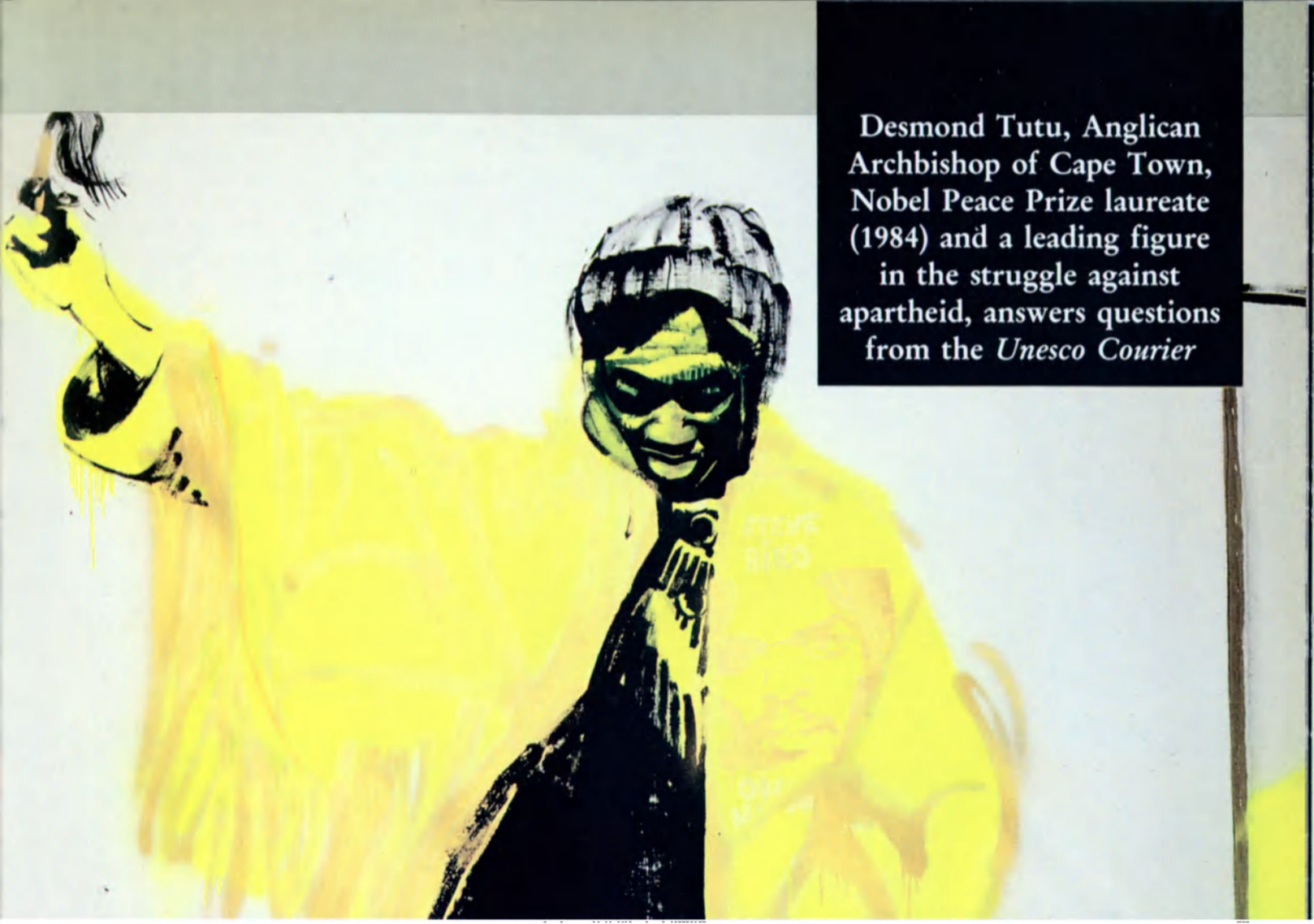
characteristics will give way to recognition of a common denominator—the state of crisis facing most national economies. This new egalitarianism will find expression first in the erosion of purely cultural specificities. Already, the education system of more than one developed country is being modified considerably towards acceptance of a new ecumenicism. Already, voices can be heard expounding metaphysical relativism and the notion that all religions are of equal validity, which amounts to giving intolerance and tolerance the same standing. Already, the concept of an "international style" exists, especially in the plastic arts.

There seems little prospect that society will become more just in the coming decade. The best we can hope for is that it will be no more unjust than the one we know today. The sole guarantee of a relatively just society is the moral sense of its members, but it is difficult to see how economic necessity could become a driving force for moral education. At best the society of the future will be an egoistic, indifferent society devoid of any moral standard at all. The only hope for such a society lies in the demographic extension of this egoism and indifference which will force it to organize itself on a technological rather than an ideological basis and incite man to put his trust in a computer rather than in his neighbours. In this way, at least for a time, we will be able to avoid bloodshed, since no one is going to throw himself, knife in hand, onto a machine.

This is why the best thing we can do is to leave the future in peace and make an effort to organize the present as intelligently as possible, paying more attention to those who are close to or distant from us in space rather than in time. Those who come after us, who will live in our towns and our apartments and sleep in our bedrooms, will neither thank us nor curse us for the state in which we have left the world to them, just as we neither thank nor curse our predecessors, occupied as we are with more current problems and feelings.

What we see as the future will be the present of those who come after us. This is why the best thing to do is to build houses and hospitals for those who need them now, making them solid and not too ugly. It is better to act with justice now than to count on the future triumph of justice and common sense. Our actions today will affect the flora and fauna, the natural surroundings of our successors just as the environment of those who are now twenty or thirty years old is the result of the combined efforts of Le Corbusier and the Luftwaffe. If only for this reason, we should not credit the future with an enviable superiority or with special qualities. It would be equally dangerous to envy our successors and to weave all kinds of dreams around the society of the future. It is quite possible that we are in an enviable position since, when we do good, or harm too for that matter, at least we know who is affected. ■

A New Planet, by the Russian artist Constantin Yvon (1875-1958).



Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1984) and a leading figure in the struggle against apartheid, answers questions from the *Unesco Courier*

'NO ONE WILL STOP US...'

BY DESMOND TUTU

Freedom and human rights are major issues in Eastern Europe today. Isn't that also the case in South Africa?

— Yes, and the movement towards freedom and respect for human rights in Eastern Europe is as exciting as the potential for the same movement in South Africa.

However, there are clear differences between the two situations. The oppression of the majority of people in South Africa has been on the basis of race. The iniquity of racism is that it leads people who feel superior to others to treat them as less than human. So racists facing mass protests are, for example, less hesitant in ordering police or troops to kill demonstrators than rulers who feel they would be killing their compatriots. In most East European countries—the exception being Romania—the rulers appear to have been more restrained than in South Africa.

In addition, many people in Eastern Europe have had more opportunities to control their lives and to participate in economic development than our people have had in South Africa. There has been a tradition of democratic experience in previous eras in many East European countries. In South Africa our people have suffered racial

After Apartheid (above), *Brimstone* (top), and *Tribute to Steve Biko* (preceding page), acrylic and fluorescent paint on canvas (1978), by Fluoman (pseudonym of the French artist Antoine Tricon). See also pages 24, 46 and 50.

ART AGAINST APARTHEID

"*Apartheid:* a harsh, mean word that resounds in one's ears like a trapdoor opening beneath a gallows" (Michel Leiris).

Artists of the World Against Apartheid, an association founded with support from the United Nations in 1982, has built up an important collection of works of art donated by their creators in response to an appeal to the world's artists and intellectuals to demonstrate publicly their belief in freedom and human dignity and to protest against racial discrimination in South Africa.

The collection, comprising some 200 works by artists of international reputation, has been exhibited in many parts of the world.

A specially produced catalogue includes texts by noted contemporary writers such as Jorge Amado, André Brink, Julio Cortázar and Michel Leiris.

The collection will form the basis of a future museum against apartheid and will be presented to the first free and democratic government of South Africa to be elected by universal suffrage.

oppression for three hundred years. They have constantly struggled to be able to participate in a democratic system but they have never achieved it. Economically, for the whole of the industrialized era our people have been denied opportunities for learning and for jobs because of the colour of their skins. As a result, as we begin to see a democracy emerge in South Africa, we are going to need massive international assistance to give the opportunities for industrial development which our people have never had throughout their history.

Is there, in your opinion, a link between democracy and development?

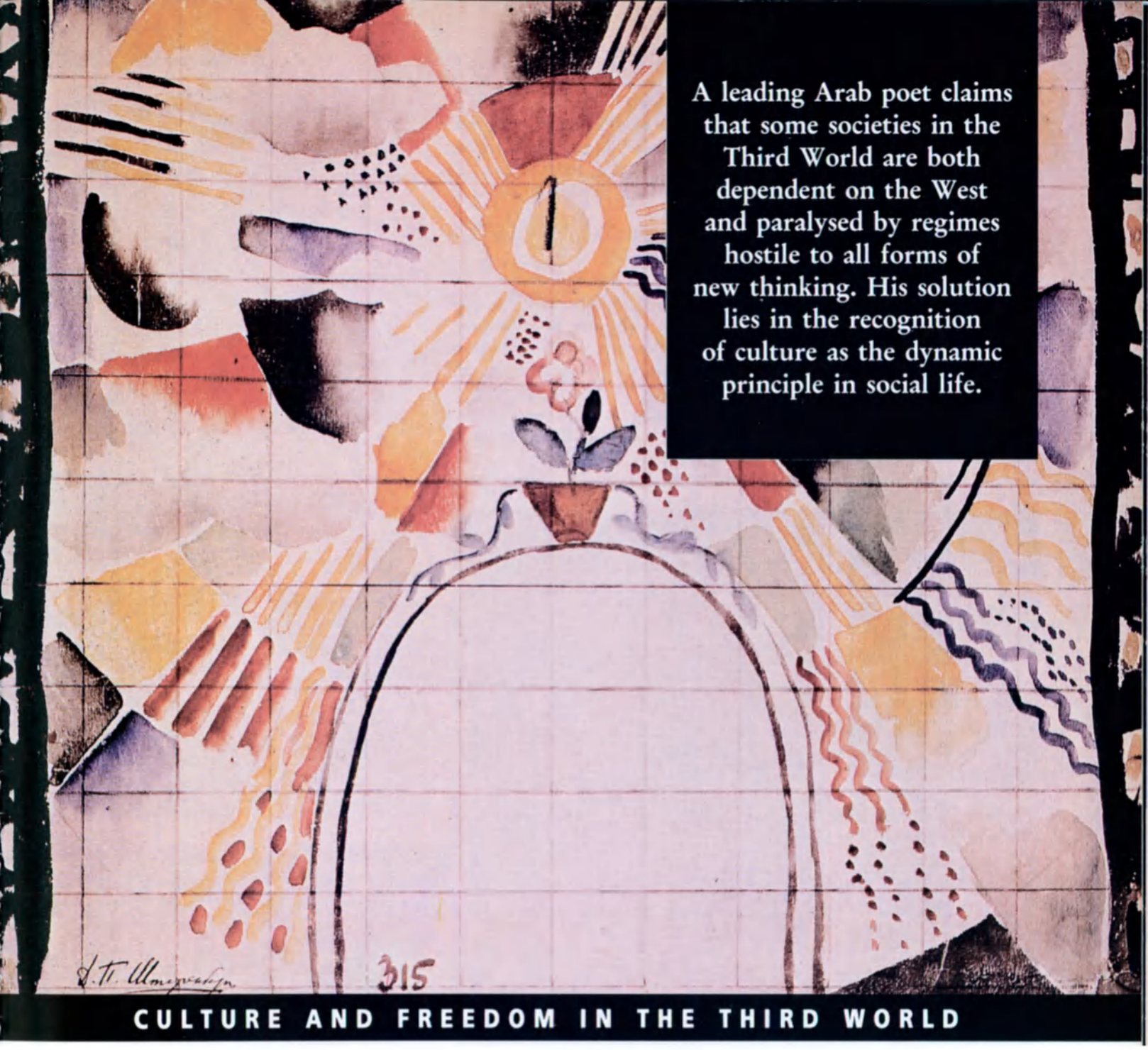
— Development depends on democracy. People are decision-making creatures. God has given them free will and they must be able to exercise control over development through a democratic political system if they are to feel fully involved in it. Development which is imposed on people in a paternalistic way, on the basis of big brother knowing what is good for people, will fail.

In South Africa in particular, is there truly a movement towards democracy? To what extent is the system of apartheid coming to an end?

— In many ways, we are now where we were in 1960. Our political organizations are again unbanned and able to operate more freely than in the past thirty years. But black people still have no vote and the core of apartheid is the denial of political power. Also, the laws which form what we call the "pillars of apartheid" are still firmly in place. The difference between now and 1960 is that the white-controlled government says it is prepared to negotiate the sharing of power and to reconsider those laws. But we have yet to see what it is going to offer. So from the point of view of what the government is offering, we are standing on the threshold of interesting possibilities. But from the point of view of what our people want, then, yes, there is truly a movement towards democracy. We are determined to achieve it, and we shall achieve it ultimately. No one, least of all the South African government, will stop us.

Are there specific forms, specific conditions, for a democratic evolution in the South African context? Will the principle of "one person, one vote" be viable between communities that have been hostile for so long?

— Democracy depends on universal franchise. Without the vote, there is no democracy and no prospect of co-operation among communities. Protection for every individual, irrespective of community, is provided by a bill of rights, enforced by independent courts of law. Only once the human dignity of all South Africans is guaranteed by equal rights can we expect to see true co-operation between South Africans begin to develop, from whatever community they come. ■



A leading Arab poet claims that some societies in the Third World are both dependent on the West and paralysed by regimes hostile to all forms of new thinking. His solution lies in the recognition of culture as the dynamic principle in social life.

THE SPIRIT OF CREATION

BY ADONIS

As we witness the awakening of identities on the world stage today it is as if we were in a theatre watching a play. A tragic drama is unfolding in which the only way for some to achieve self-expression is to deny self-expression to others; in which the long struggle through which man has sought throughout history to draw closer to his fellows is suddenly being transformed into a battle waged by man on man; in which the fears we had for freedom are giving way to fear of freedom itself.

By a strange paradox, perhaps the remedy is suddenly becoming the disease. Could this be

Preceding page, *Freedom in the Sun* (1918), watercolour and ink on cardboard, by the Russian artist David Sterenberg (1881-1948). Right, *Peace and Freedom* (1983), Arabic calligraphy by Hassan Massoudy. Below right, *Purification*, vegetable dyes on cloth, by Bogolan-Kasobane, a group of 6 artists from Bamako, Mali.
Opposite page, *The Precarious Equilibrium of Enterprises* (1987), oil on canvas by the Cuban-born artist Ramon Alejandro.

because the awakening of identities heralds a return rather than a new departure, a retreat rather than an advance? Because it is taking advantage of religions, races or nations? Because, in short, it is the awakening of what should have remained dormant?

Or perhaps this awakening is the expression of an error being committed in an attempt to correct an earlier error which resulted from the crossing of technological culture and ideological culture, with its right-wing and left-wing fascist elements? If this is so, then in what is awakening today under the banner of Freedom, there may be something which—contradictorily—accentuates the problems relating to freedom.

Under the impact of Western technological and ideological culture, the development of the economic and political structures of the modern

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is the pen name of Ali Ahmad Saïd Esber, Lebanese poet and one of the leading figures in contemporary Arabic writing. He is currently Assistant Permanent Delegate to Unesco of the League of Arab States. He has published some twenty volumes of poetry and literary criticism, many of which have been translated into other languages. English translations of selections of his poetry include *The Blood of Adonis* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), *Mirrors* (TR Press, London, 1976) and *Transformations of the Lover* (Ohio University Press, 1983).

world has tended to harness human efforts to the satisfaction of material needs. In the mirror of this culture, man seems bereft of aspirations to freedom, love, and poetry, and his needs seem reduced to those of subsistence.

The media, and certain cultural activities, seem dominated by the urge to achieve the highest possible level of prosperity. Even education tends increasingly to elevate the satisfaction of material needs to the status of a moral value, a symbol of civilization. It sometimes even suggests ways of satisfying these needs and holds up for approval an image of man as a creature who actually savours his "enslavement", accepts himself as a piece of merchandise, and allows himself to be transformed into a mere cog in a machine.

The Third World today is a vast laboratory in which these trends are being tested, gaining widespread acceptance and taking root to such an extent that man as a free and creative being scarcely seems to exist.

These trends are accompanied by a pervasive—albeit sometimes concealed—sense of the supremacy of the West. It is true that the West is engaged in a continuing struggle to monopolize the central role and is determined neither to abolish that role nor to harmonize its relations with the non-Western world. This merely increases the hostility of the latter, which is transformed into a dependency, a captive market. In accordance with the logic of the balance of power, this trend is becoming more marked since it is linked to an arms race. Let us not dwell on the contempt it implies for other cultures, for those who possess nothing but their culture and who, if they were to lose it, would lose everything, including themselves.

Culture—the product of free creation

We can measure the value attached to freedom in a given society by taking as a yardstick the value attached to its culture and that culture's openness to the future. Action and efficiency are implied in the etymology of the word "culture",

which has connotations of skill, talent and technical accomplishment. (Is there not a close etymological link between the Arabic word *'atqana* and the Greek word *tekhne?*) In the sense that it is efficient, culture is the product of free creation. As such, it is not just one factor among many others in human development; it is its very foundation, its dynamic principle.

However, culture in this sense is today very often absent from many Third World societies. Perhaps this may help to clarify some of the reasons for the lack of freedom in these societies, the most profound of which are perhaps related to the jurisprudential interpretation of religious texts. This dominant interpretation connects the religious-jurisprudential to the socio-political, and explains why freedom is not thought of as a "political" or "civil" concept, but simply as a religious concept.

In this context freedom has gradually become, paradoxically, an exercise in obedience, in allegiance to the custodian of authority to whom all power is delegated. And this is the origin of the unity between truth and power, and also, incestuously, of the unity between freedom and power, and between thought and power.

The existence of the individual is thus rooted in obedience. He thinks and speaks like the group of which he is an organic part. Is not marginalization from the group or tribe a form of unbelief, usually leading to exclusion and sometimes to death? Intellectual marginalization thus assumes the guise of political and jurisdictional marginalization, since it is an expression of disobedience of the power established in the name of the group. What can the individual do? Stripped of property rights and the right to work, man can continue to struggle. But when he is stripped of his very language, that is, of his right to speak, he is in a sense stripped of his right to live.

History has shown that all those who have exercised their natural right to speak out against the power-group have paid for it dearly, usually with their lives. Many others have imagined that the possession of objects could liberate them from the power of thought! They abdicated to the powers-that-be their right to speak, and restricted themselves to material goods and trade. Perhaps this explains the mutation of culture in these societies. Essentially, culture is the achievement of an awareness of the world, an act of creation. In our societies it has become a form of embellishment, an instrument, and the intellectual has become a functionary in the service of the power-group.

Paralysis of thought

In certain types of society, earthly progress is measured in terms of its conformity to injunctions from heaven, and the happiness of the individual is measured in terms of his dependence on the powers-that-be. This dependence is embodied in the concepts of harmony, conciliation

and unity. Harmony to deny social conflict, conciliation to deny intellectual conflict and unity to deny division and fragmentation.

This being so, progress is no more than a higher form of return to the original precepts. Unity is simply that of the group-nation, which is based on the uniqueness of the original texts, which is in turn based on the uniqueness of the truth, which is itself based on the uniqueness of power. Such oneness means the simultaneous stifling of man and of knowledge. The individual is a stranger unto himself. For heaven, he exists through religion; on earth, he exists by virtue of the power-group.

Today, the dominant mode of thinking in many Third World societies has theologico-ideological roots. This world is assailed by two types of knowledge. The first type is a vehicle of the past. It is concerned with the hereafter and with means of gaining eternity. The second type is a vehicle for Western modernity. It is above all concerned with the processing of material things and with technologies of production and consumption. On the one hand there is the liturgy of the celestial paradise; on the other, the liturgy of the earthly paradise. It is a world which paralyses the mind because it produces neither thought nor technology. The dominant cultural trend confirms this paralysis: it represents total conformity with the authority of a text which, in practice, is that of the powers-that-be.

The Prisoner (1979), by the Iranian sculptor Iradj Emami.

The prospects for freedom

To explain the nature of freedom in the Third World, I would add that the West (that "Other", modern world) governs this world with rationality and technical skills oriented towards consumption, which assimilates it and makes it dependent. The market, energy and strategy are more apparent than man, his freedom and his great cosmic problems. It is a functional vision which masks man and reveals the machine.

Today, just as in the traditional theological vision, Western-style production is geared more closely to the renewal of means than to the renewal of man. The means of enslaving man, not of liberating him. What is produced becomes, in practice, more important than man himself. It is as if man exists as part of a machine. And someone who is part of a machine loses possession of his self (Al Farabi), since the self then belongs to someone else. It matters little whether the machine is textual-linguistic or material-technological.

What then are the prospects for freedom in the Third World? First of all I must stress that in this world there is a current of democratic thinking, writing and action. In social terms, this current is marginal, but in cultural terms it is most significant and holds the greatest promise for a future worthy of man. It looks for inspiration to a world to which it does not belong.

What may seem a paradox is in reality the very principle of the creative movement, which produces and reproduces the past—but in a different, renewed form, within the context of different knowledge. The relationships which this movement establishes with the past (the heritage) are no longer horizontal but vertical. They are relationships which represent the continuing growth of the past, through the present, towards the future.

It is a movement rooted in language and not in vocabulary, in man and not in an institution or a regime, in life and not in ideology and instruction. It is bound up with symbols, legends, and the dynamics of imagination and creation. Chronological time ceases to exist, and is replaced by another kind of time, vertical time. There is no more room for a single, definitive, total meaning. Meaning is open, indefinite, shifting, and it is in this changeability that freedom, democracy, multiplicity and the right to be different are rooted.

This being so, what are the prospects for freedom on a world scale?

I think that, essentially, these prospects hinge on the West's future conception of the Third World and on the nature of the West's relations with the Third World. Misunderstanding about freedom in the world will begin to be dispelled when the West undertakes a complete and radical reappraisal of itself, of its culture and of its relationship with the "Other", non-Western world. A new awareness of this other world must emerge in the West and become another facet, an extension of itself.

In the light of this new awareness, man's identity would no longer be predetermined, it would become the fruit of a creative process which is renewed with each new project. The past (religious or national), would then be simply the most primitive, the least rich, the least profound component of that identity, which can only be the result of a continuing process of creation. Alone among all living creatures man makes his own identity through his creative work and thought. Human identity is not a fixed quantity: it does not derive from any kind of past; it is a permanent quest for the future within a continuing creative destiny.

To achieve this level of awareness of the duality of identity and otherness, politics must become an integral part of a whole, that of culture. The former must be subject to the latter; political action must be primarily a means of reinforcing the exchange between oneself and others, it must satisfy a cultural desire for dialogue, exchanges, complementarities.

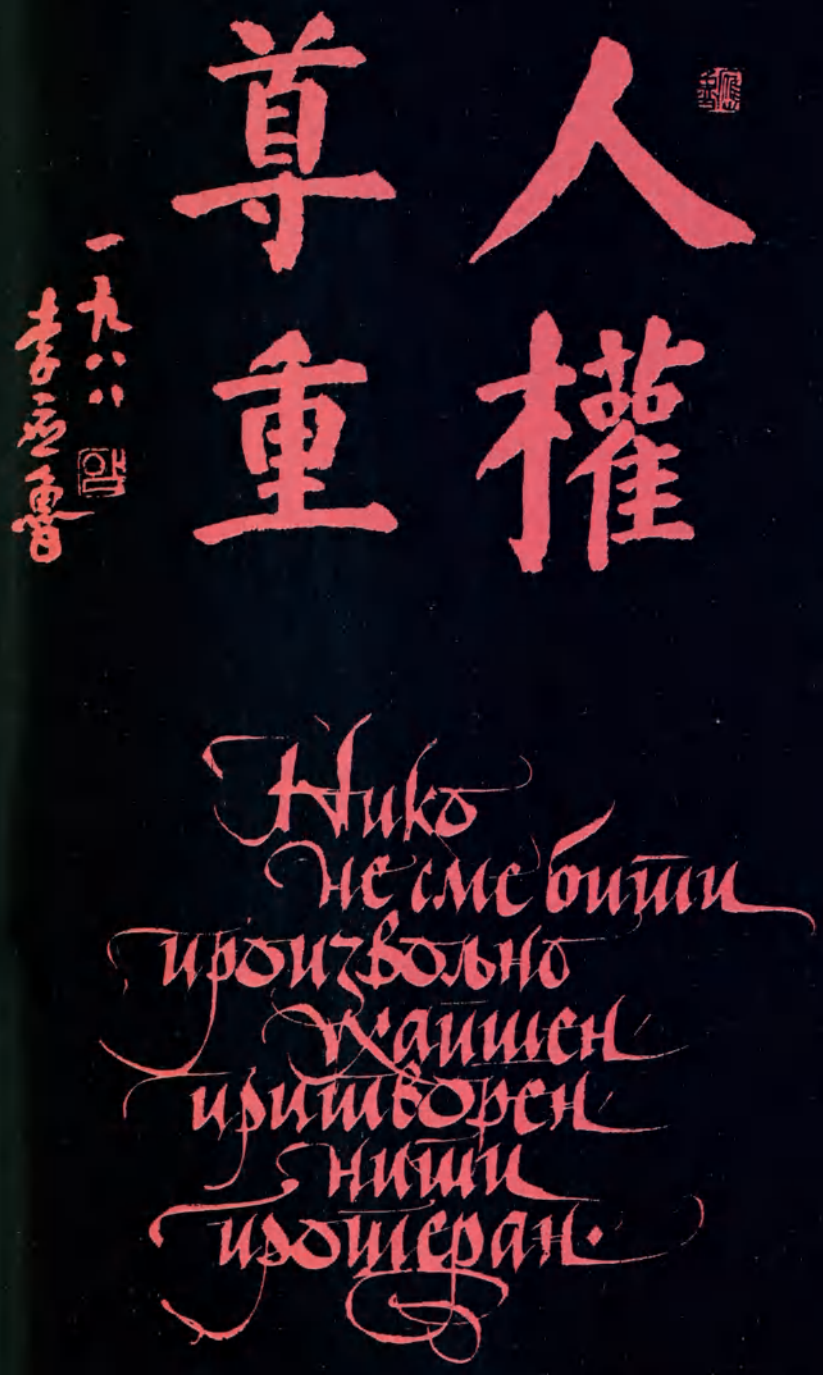
Politics must then, above all in the West, achieve wonders. It must do so in order, at long last, to give the lie to Saint-Just's remark that "All the arts have achieved wonders; only the art of governing has produced nothing but monsters."

■

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

BY GEORGES-HENRI DUMONT

Unesco often intervenes when human rights are violated. For the first time, we publish an account of this little-known aspect of Unesco's work.



MANY people know that Unesco's action in favour of human rights serves the fundamental purpose, set forth in its Constitution, of furthering "universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations".

It is also widely known that since its foundation Unesco has been concerned with the teaching of human rights. Through numerous publications and in consultation with many specialists, it has done much valuable work in this field over the years.

Equally well-known is Unesco's standard-setting action relating to human rights, enshrined in nine conventions, twenty-one recommendations and two declarations concerning rights to education, culture and information.

However, few people know that Unesco takes action on specific human rights problems through an organ of its Executive Board, the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations. If the existence of the Committee is virtually unknown to the general public, this is perhaps because much of its work is done in private session.

The Committee was originally set up to examine "communications from individuals or associations invoking the violation of certain human rights, particularly educational and cultural rights, by states which are or are not members of Unesco".

In its early years, from 1965 to 1977, the Committee dealt only with questions relating to discrimination in education, but in 1978 its responsibilities were broadened, along with those of Unesco's Executive Board. Since then, all Unesco's fields of competence have been covered by the Committee, and general questions relating to human rights violations have been examined as well as individual cases.

The Committee had to find a way of reconciling two contradictory demands—how to operate with maximum effectiveness while at the same time Unesco is prohibited as an institution from intervening in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of its member states.

The Executive Board resolved this dilemma by deciding that Unesco should "act in a spirit of international co-operation, conciliation and mutual understanding"; and that it should not "play the role of an international judicial body". Thus any idea of sanctions was implicitly rejected.

How the Committee works

The Committee on Conventions and Recommendations meets in private session twice a year. One disadvantage of working in this way is that the Committee's decisions may be deprived of support they might otherwise receive from public opinion. Another is that the public may get the impression that Unesco simply makes solemn and noble declarations whereas in reality it is engaged in practical, continuous and effective action.

Yet some of the benefits of working in private session outweigh the disadvantages. Discussion focuses on the humanitarian rather than the political aspects of the problem. Since governments are not publicly accused, they do not feel that they are losing face when they yield to a decision by the Committee.

To understand how the Committee works, let us take the example of a person—perhaps a writer, a teacher, an artist or a journalist—who is in prison. A dossier compiled by Unesco's Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs is given to each member of the Committee. It contains information on behalf of the alleged victim and, if possible, the initial reactions of the government concerned, together with a summary provided by the representative of the Director-General of Unesco. A representative of the government concerned is invited to attend the meeting of the Committee in order to provide additional information or to justify his government's acts. He or she may be asked a variety of questions after making a statement. Some of the most common questions include:

— If the alleged victim has been imprisoned without having been convicted, why is this so? When will the trial take place?

— If the prisoner has been tried, on what grounds has he or she been convicted?

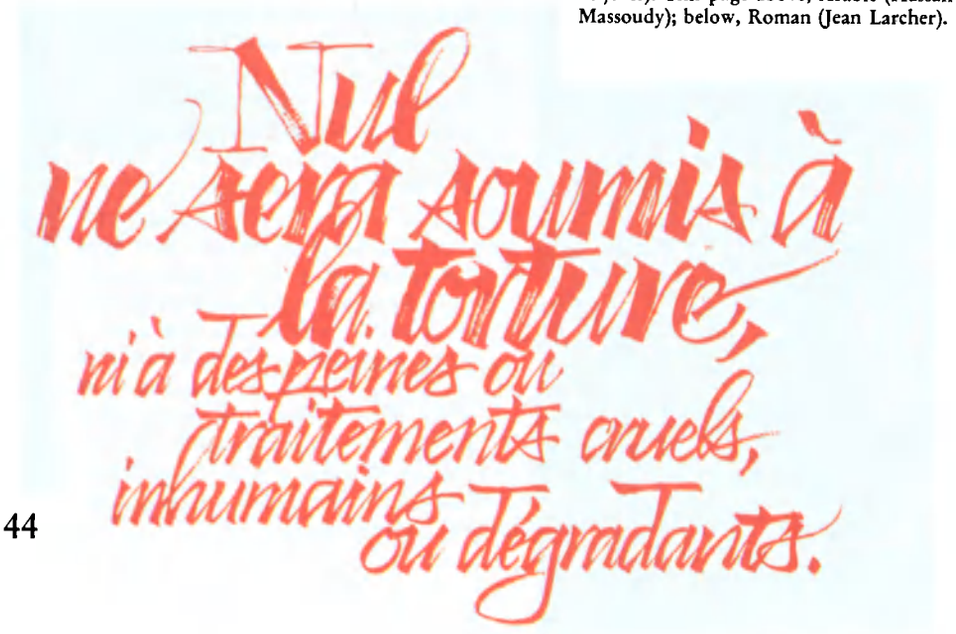
— Has the prisoner's family been authorized to visit him or her? If so, how often?

— What is the prisoner's state of health? Is he or she receiving the necessary treatment?

— In the case of an elderly person, is there a chance of a speedy release?

It is rare that all these questions are answered immediately, but the representative of the government concerned may undertake to deal with them as quickly as possible, thus setting in motion a process beneficial to the prisoner. Even if the case is not settled, subsequent to this session of the Committee many prisoners receive a medical or family visit for the first time.

Many cases are settled during this initial period of dialogue with government representatives. If a communication is declared to be admissible, and dialogue with the government concerned breaks down or the government in question remains silent, then the Committee's task becomes much more difficult. The government will tend to dig in its heels. In such cases it may be necessary to await a political change before dialogue can be resumed.



This page and preceding page, examples of calligraphy in various alphabets, from a 1989 calendar illustrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights published by the French magazine *Non-Violence Actualité*. Preceding page, Chinese (Ung No Lee) and Cyrillic (Jovica Veljovic). This page above, Arabic (Hassan Massoudy); below, Roman (Jean Larcher).

Some 200 cases have been submitted to the Committee since 1978. The results of its efforts may be considered to be encouraging, especially in recent years: 30 cases were settled between 1978 and 1981; 85 between 1982 and 1985; 86 between 1986 and 1989.

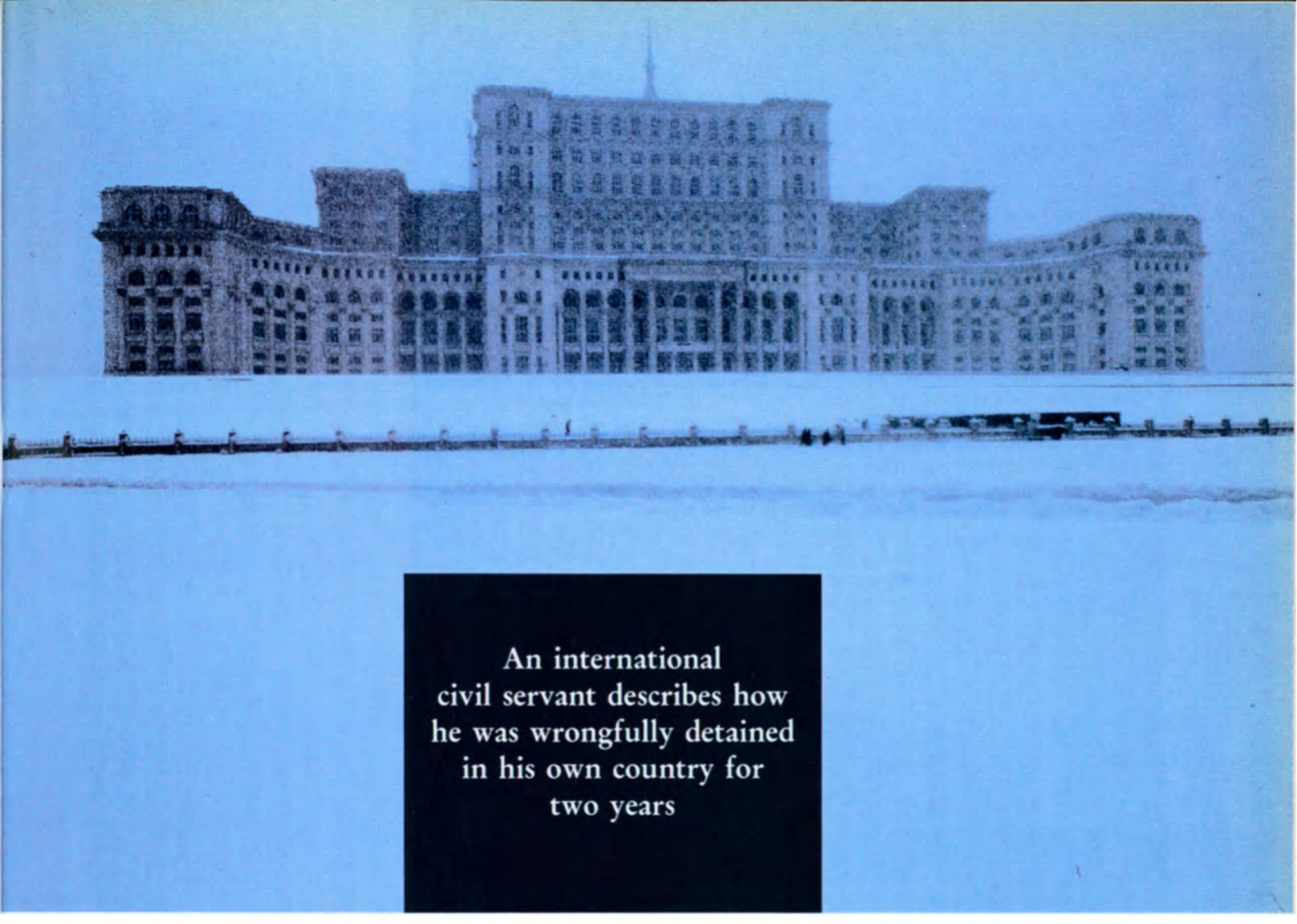
Unesco has played a decisive role in the case of three well-known figures: the Argentine pianist Miguel Angel Estrella, who was freed from prison in 1980; Professor Andrey Sakharov, Nobel Peace Prize winner (1975); and Vaclav Havel, now President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia.

In ten years, around a hundred persons, often imprisoned in very unpleasant conditions, have been freed or acquitted.

Many communications submitted to the Committee concern intellectuals forbidden to return to their countries, students refused permission to go abroad or denied the award of a degree or study grant, persons arbitrarily deprived of their employment, or publications banned by the authorities. The list of violations of human rights is too long to list here. In all cases, the Committee has learned to act with obstinacy and perseverance.

This action in favour of human rights is carried out in the name of the Executive Board and the Director-General of Unesco. In order to help reach a solution in certain cases, the Director-General may intervene personally, either confidentially or publically, if for example he learns that an international civil servant working for Unesco has been detained or arrested in the country of which he or she is a national. This is what happened to Sorin Dumitrescu, as he describes in the following article. ■

GEORGES-HENRI DUMONT,
Belgian historian and member of the Royal Academy of Belgium, is the author of numerous historical works including *Marie de Bourgogne* (Fayard, Paris, 1982) and *La vie quotidienne en Belgique au temps de Léopold II* (Marabout Université, Brussels, 1986). He is chairman of Unesco's International Commission which is responsible for the preparation of a new edition of the *History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind*. A member of Unesco's Executive Board from 1981 to 1989, he was chairman of its Committee on Conventions and Recommendations from 1987 to 1989.



An international civil servant describes how he was wrongfully detained in his own country for two years

IN THE HANDS OF THE SECURITATE

BY SORIN DUMITRESCU

At the end of 1969, I was appointed to the post of Director of the Office of Hydrology in the Science Sector of Unesco.

Shortly after taking up my appointment, like everyone else who becomes an international civil servant, I took an oath to fulfil my functions and generally to conduct myself "with the interests of the Organization only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions...from any government..."

Aware as I was of the full meaning of these words, I never suspected that, a few years later, they were destined to play such an important part in my life.

An uncompleted mission

On 6 June 1976, I left Paris to represent the Director-General of Unesco at two meetings—the first in Romania (8-13 June), the second in Bulgaria (15-18 June). I made the trip in my own car, accompanied by my wife and my daughter.

At the end of my stay in Romania, just as I was preparing to cross the frontier into Bulgaria, I was stopped by the Romanian police. I was told that I had to return immediately to Bucharest to see the deputy minister for foreign affairs, Mr. Vasile Gliga. I telephoned Mr. Gliga and explained to him that I had urgent business to attend to in Varna, Bulgaria, but to no avail. I had to return to Bucharest for an appointment with Mr. Gliga who told me that I could not leave the country until "certain important matters" had been settled.

I told him that in the circumstances I would have to inform the Director-General of Unesco that I had been prevented from fulfilling my mission in accordance with my instructions. The deputy minister advised me to do nothing, so as to avoid an incident. According to him the problem would shortly be solved. Anxious not to worsen the situation, I agreed to wait until the morning of 18 June.

On that day I was again summoned to the office of the deputy minister, who told me that the Romanian government had decided to "withdraw my status as an international civil servant". I was to return to the ministry on the following day to draw up a letter to the

SORIN DUMITRESCU,
Romanian-born hydrologist and Deputy Assistant Director-General in Unesco's Science Sector from 1985 to 1988, is currently an adviser to the Director-General of Unesco. The author of a number of publications on hydrology and water resources management, he was awarded the International Hydrology Prize in 1988.

Director-General announcing my resignation from my post at Unesco. I was forbidden, on pain of instant arrest, to contact Unesco in any way whatever. When I asked the reasons for this decision, the deputy minister said that he was not authorized to divulge them to me. I told him that I considered this to be an abuse of power since the government of Romania had no right to revoke my status as an international civil servant. But I did not leave his office until I had agreed to draw up, by the following day, a letter of resignation.

Once outside the confines of the deputy minister's office, I thought for a moment of contacting Mr. Thomas Keller, head of Unesco's European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES), whose headquarters is in Bucharest. Mr. Keller, however, was on holiday and it would be risky to try to telephone Paris or to contact an embassy, since I was clearly being followed. In the end, taking enormous risks and adopting methods worthy of a detective novel, my daughter succeeded in transmitting to the French embassy a message which I requested the French authorities to pass on to the Director-General of Unesco.

The same day, 18 June, an official from the "Post Office" came to our house to change our telephone which, he told us, was certainly not working properly.

The fourth paragraph

During the night I attempted to draw up a letter of resignation that would be as "clear" as possible:

"Dear Director-General,

"I have the honour to inform you that the government of Romania has decided that I should resume my duties at the National Hydrological Service.

"I therefore ask you to accept my resignation from Unesco to take effect immediately.

"Since, under present circumstances, I am unable to return to Paris, I would be grateful if you would ask the Bureau of Personnel to let me know the steps I should take to meet my obligations to Unesco and the terms under which I can benefit from rights relating to termination of service.

"At this time when I am leaving Unesco, I would like to thank you for the confidence you have shown in me and to assure you that I remain faithful to the ideals of the Organization."

On reading the letter, my wife and daughter both had the same reaction: "Do you really think they will be so stupid as to let you send such a letter?". I wrote my answer on a piece of paper which we burnt after they had read it: "I am trying to negotiate."

On 19 June, I presented myself at the ministry of foreign affairs with this draft letter. The person responsible for Unesco affairs read it and asked me: "Couldn't you give some other reason for your resignation? Why not say that you are unwell, for example?" I replied that under the circumstances no one would believe this and that it was better to tell the truth. The deputy minister, to whom my interlocutor referred the problem, accepted the explanation given, but wanted to strike out the fourth paragraph—the one in which I expressed my fidelity to the ideals of Unesco.

For me the two essential paragraphs were the first and the third. The fourth paragraph did indeed reflect my feelings, but it was much less important for the "transparency" I wished to convey in my letter. I could have given it up, but I made a show of wanting to keep it in, stressing the fact that it helped to soften the excessively brusque tone of the letter overall. After further discussion with the deputy minister my interlocutor returned with, to my great surprise, his consent to the contents of the letter. I left the ministry feeling greatly relieved—the Director-General would have no difficulty in understanding my message. I felt that I had scored a point.

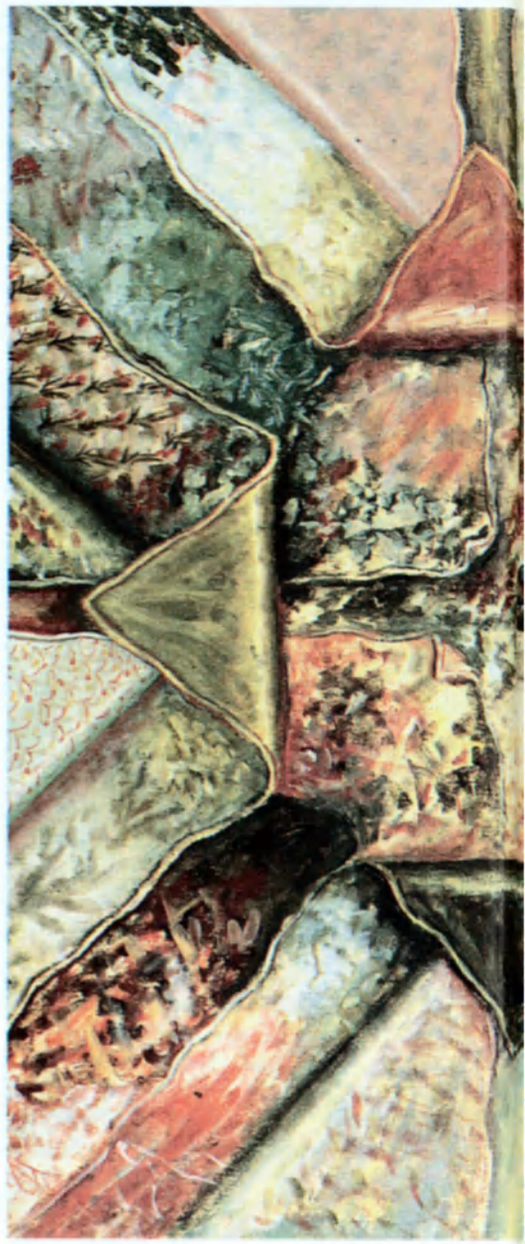
'You are and you remain a member of the Unesco Secretariat'

Two weeks passed and nothing happened. I began to have doubts—had the Romanian authorities sent my original letter? Had they perhaps concocted another letter and forged my signature? At the ministry they had told me that I would receive a reply from Unesco within a week at the latest. The utter uncertainty about the possible outcome of the sending of my letter of resignation was one of the hardest things to bear.

Around 5 July, unable to restrain myself any longer, I decided to risk everything and telephoned Unesco headquarters in Paris. The Director-General was not in Paris and so I asked to speak to the Deputy Director-General, Mr. John Fobes. When I heard his voice, I asked him if he was aware of my problem. He said that he was. I then explained that owing to the conditions under which I was telephoning I could only speak to him briefly and that I had one single question to put to him: "Was I still a member of the Secretariat?". In calm, serious tones which I shall never forget, he replied: "You are and you remain a member of the Secretariat." The Director-General considered my letter of resignation as inadmissible and he had written a letter to this effect to the Romanian Permanent Delegate to Unesco.

I hung up and then gave a brief account of the situation to my family. There was a feeling of euphoria—we were saved. Our problems would now be rapidly resolved and we should soon return to Paris. We did not, alas, know enough about the nature of the Romanian regime.

I learned later that the original version of my letter of "resignation" had been delivered to the Director-General's office on 21 June. In a covering letter which accompanied my letter, the Romanian Ambassador indicated that he was forwarding it "on the instructions of his government". Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco, immediately summoned the Ambassador and informed him that the form in which my resignation had been presented did not comply with the correct legal procedures. To avoid causing the Romanian authorities any embarrassment, he preferred not to reply to the letter for a period of ten days. Once this delay had elapsed, if I had still not returned to Paris, he would be obliged to react officially.



Prapor (1981), oil on canvas, by the Romanian artist Horia Bernea. (Art Against Apartheid Collection, see page 38.)

Since nothing happened during the following ten days, on 1 July the Director-General sent an official letter to the Ambassador declaring my letter of resignation to be inadmissible and adding: "the conditions under which Mr. Dumitrescu's request was formulated and presented place in serious jeopardy the very basis of the international civil service."

On 14 July, I met Mr. Thomas Keller, head of Unesco's Bucharest Centre. He had been instructed by Mr. M'Bow to contact me and find out from me personally exactly what my position was. Being uncertain whether I would be able to reach the Centre, I asked Mr.

Keller to meet me at the corner of the street. He reached the meeting place before I did. We walked together in a nearby park followed by several members of the infamous Securitate. Although I had never met him before—the person who awaited me could have been an impostor—I spoke to him frankly and asked him to tell the Director-General that I considered my resignation to be null and void.

At that time, I still believed that the whole affair was due to a handful of over-zealous civil servants and that once it came to the knowledge of the highest ranks of the Party and the state we should be allowed to leave. I wrote a number of explanatory notes for their attention, explaining that I had nothing to reproach myself for and requesting an explanation of why I had been retained against my will. I never received a single reply. Then, one day, through an official's indiscretion, I learned that the Romanian head of state, Nicolae Ceausescu, was fully aware of my case and that he had personally given the order not to give way to pressure from Unesco. There was no room for further compromise. I realized that I had to put everything at stake.

On 6 August, Mr. M'Bow wrote a letter to Ceausescu which began with these words:

"Convinced that I have exhausted all other possible paths of action I am taking the liberty of informing you personally about a matter to which I attach the utmost importance. It concerns Mr. Sorin Dumitrescu, Director of the Office of Hydrology at the Unesco Secretariat and a Romanian national who, having been detained on Romanian territory through which he was merely passing before carrying out a mission I had entrusted to him, has been unable to return to his post in Paris. To my knowledge this is the first time in the history of the United Nations system that a high-ranking international civil servant has found himself in such a situation."

The state of Unesco

This letter went unanswered. The Director-General then decided to bring the matter to the attention of Unesco's Executive Board. The matter was discussed for the first time during a private session of the Board on 9 October. After presenting the facts of the case, Mr. M'Bow stressed that if he accepted the situation created by the Romanian authorities he would be failing to observe the oath he had sworn when he had assumed his functions as Director-General in 1974 and that, if he did not receive the support of member states in this matter he would feel obliged to submit his resignation to the Executive Board. He received very widespread and very strong support from the Board.

Impressed by this turn of events, the Romanian government, through its representative on the Executive Board, declared that it was ready to discuss the matter further. Some ten days later, Mr. Luis Marqués, Director of Personnel at Unesco, went to Bucharest as representative of the Director-General.

Meanwhile, in Bucharest, I was quite unaware of what had taken place at the meeting of the Executive Board. The people with whom I was dealing—the gentlemen of the Securitate—tried to demoralize me: what they said to me in substance was that "in no country can an ordinary citizen oppose the head of state; the Director-General cannot refuse to accept your resignation..."

A few days before the Director-General's representative arrived in Bucharest, I was summoned to appear before the Central Committee of the Party. The deputy head of the foreign affairs section told me that they held nothing against me and that I had been retained in Romania simply because I had been too long abroad. I should immediately agree to return to employment in the national administration. "You must understand that Romania, which has resisted the pressures of its great neighbour to the east, is not going to yield to the pressure of the state of Unesco." To which I replied: "That is where you are wrong. Unesco is not a state, but a community of 150 member states with which it is not in the interest of Romania to quarrel."

I was able to meet Luis Marqués when he arrived on 20 October. The Romanian authorities requested me to inform him clearly that I no longer intended to return to Paris. However, when he told me what had taken place at the meeting of the Unesco Executive Board, I confirmed to him that I was, on the contrary, ready to return to my post at Unesco as soon as possible and that I refused any compromise on this matter. The next day, at the Central Committee, I informed my usual interlocutor that he could no longer count on my co-operation. He replied that my behaviour put me in a very serious position and that my case was no longer in his hands.

A week later, I was taken to court by the minister of finance. I owed the Romanian state a sum of about 70,000 francs—every Romanian citizen working abroad must, by law, turn over to the state the greater part of his earnings. In my case, it was a question of arrears, since I had already paid over more than 120,000 francs. The case was judged in December and was a pure formality. I declared that I was ready to pay what I owed as soon as I was in a position to do so. The money was deposited at the Unesco Centre in Bucharest in January 1977, thus settling the only formal legal difference I had had with the Romanian authorities.

At the beginning of February 1977, Mr. M'Bow paid an official visit to Romania. Initially arranged for September 1976, the visit had been postponed several times at the request of the Romanian government. Mr. M'Bow hoped to obtain the government's agreement to my leaving the country, but no such agreement was forthcoming. During an interview he had with Ceausescu, the latter stated that Unesco's request was inadmissible since a matter of national sovereignty was involved. The Director-General explained that, on the contrary, it was a question of international law and that the Romanian government was acting in violation of international agreements to which it was a signatory. The interview came to an abrupt end.

As arranged, I was waiting at the headquarters of the Unesco Centre for Mr. M'Bow to return, when I received a telephone call, supposedly on his behalf, telling me to go straight to his hotel and meet him there. I understood at once that this was a stratagem to prevent me from meeting him and I continued to wait at the Centre until he arrived. He assured me that he would redouble his efforts to obtain my liberation and that he would soon make the whole affair public.

The repression begins

On 4 March, a violent earthquake struck southern Romania. On 30 March, an officer appeared at my house with a summons for me to report for five months military service, beginning the following day, in a military unit whose task was to rebuild a town about a hundred kilometres from Bucharest that had been almost entirely destroyed in the earthquake. This decision, I later learned, was

enshrined in a decree, signed by Ceausescu himself, on which mine was the only name to appear.

Unesco protested against this new violation of my status as an international civil servant and requested the Romanian authorities to suspend this measure, but once again received not a whisper of a reply.

At that time I was not at all well. At the military hospital in Bucharest to which I was taken, a risk of hepatitis was diagnosed. After having decided to have me hospitalized, the commander of my unit told me, with regret, that he had been ordered to release me right away. Flanked by two soldiers, I was taken by car to my home to collect my belongings. My family watched as I was driven away, not knowing how or when they would see me again.

I was ill for several days, without medical attention, without food and scarcely able to sleep. One of my relations succeeded in finding me and told my wife and daughter where he had seen me. Our telephone had been cut off. Two members of the Securitate had been to the house and had ordered my wife and daughter to refrain from all contact with Unesco representatives. Otherwise I ran the risk of being taken before a military tribunal and they themselves could be arrested.

The purpose of the military service was to cut me off from all my contacts and it did, indeed, increase my isolation. Nevertheless, at Unesco the affair was following its course and in April the Executive Board reaffirmed its wholehearted support for the action taken by the Director-General.

Bargaining

Despite their blustering, the Romanian authorities were on the spot. They had to find a way out. In May, I was summoned to Bucharest to meet the deputy minister of the interior and head of the Securitate, N. Plechitza. For the first time I received an explanation for my retention in the country since June 1976. I was suspected of not wanting to return to Romania at the end of my contract with Unesco. Plechitza recognized that a mistake had doubtless been made but said that it was too late to reverse matters. It was now important to find some way of saving the face of the head of state, who had refused to authorize my return to Paris. I replied that, in my opinion, the prestige of a head of state could only be increased if, having discovered that an injustice had been committed, he took steps to put that injustice right.

I saw the deputy minister and his colleagues several times. They made acceptance of my resignation by Unesco a prior condition to any settlement of my problem. Once it had been accepted they would offer me a post as a deputy minister and, if I so wished, I could go and work abroad. To which I invariably answered that the plan was flawed, that Unesco would never accept my resignation until I returned to Paris and that my sole ambition was to continue with my work there.

In August the Romanian authorities came up with another plan. As my contract with Unesco was due to end on 31 October, all I had to do was to ask the Director-General not to renew my contract. In this way the problem of resignation would be avoided. My interlocutors asked me to send a letter to the Director-General containing this proposal and suggesting that he should send a representative to Bucharest so that I could confirm my decision in person. I decided to accept in the hope that my daughter at least would regain her liberty and be able to continue her studies in Paris. I told myself that in this way I would have a chance of speaking to the Director-General's representative and of revealing my real intentions to him.

The meaning of a gesture

Towards the end of August, I was told that, following my request, Mr. M'Bow had decided to send an Assistant Director-General, Mr. Jacques Rigaud, accompanied by the deputy director of the Bureau of Personnel, to Bucharest and that they would arrive on 6 September. I took advantage of this to bring my military service to an end—it had, apparently, been decided that this should be extended beyond the original five-month period—by maintaining that, if I remained a member of the armed forces, I would refuse to talk to the Unesco representatives. This the authorities accepted.

However, they had still not authorized my daughter to return to Paris. On the very day that Mr. Rigaud arrived, a Securitate agent told me that he had tried to obtain the authorization from Ceausescu at the airport as he was preparing to leave on an official visit to Bulgaria, but that he had replied with a gesture of the hand the meaning of which was not sufficiently clear. In the circumstances, it would be necessary to await the President's return in order to discover what exactly the gesture had meant. I was assured this would only be a matter of days. It was made very clear that it was essential for me to respect the arrangements made and to ensure that the Assistant Director-General left fully convinced that I did not want my contract renewed. If this was not the case I should be subject to severe repression and all hope of a compromise would be lost. I was also incidentally reminded that I should beware of road accidents since the traffic in Bucharest had become very dangerous.

I met Mr. Rigaud in the afternoon of 6 September. I explained to him why I had written my letter to the Director-General and, of course, confirmed my desire to continue to serve Unesco. I told him, "I feel in no way bound by this kind of 'gentlemen's agreement', those with whom it was made are no gentlemen." Mr. Rigaud assured me that he understood my position perfectly. I then made a tape-recording in which I stated, among other things: "I declare that I have not in any way acted in a manner contrary to Romanian law or the interests of the state of Romania.

Nothing-Nobody III
(1989), collage on wire mesh by the Romanian artist Christian Paraschiv.

All I have done is to remain faithful to the oath I took when I joined Unesco. I see no incompatibility between this oath and a citizen's duty to his country. There is no question of my changing my position. The Director-General should not hesitate to act in accordance with what he believes to be right, even if that might put my safety at risk. The life we have been subjected to since June 1976 is no life at all. My wife and I are ready to face death, but to face it standing up."

Following Mr. Rigaud's report, my contract with Unesco was renewed for two years. The Executive Board examined my case again at its 103rd session in September/October 1977. On 6 October, for the first time, the Executive Board held a public session on the problem. The chairman traced the unfolding of the affair. Referring to the United Nations Charter and Unesco's Constitution, he recalled that international civil servants had to carry out their functions in a totally independent manner subject only to the authority of the Director-General of the Organization. "The Executive Board," he concluded, "is

very concerned by what appears to be the breaking, by a member state, of international agreements freely entered into. It unreservedly supports the position adopted by the Director-General and accepts as its own the decisions he has taken."

Taking the floor in the name of his government, the Romanian representative, Marcel Ghibernea, rejected the declaration by the chairman of the Board and bitterly attacked the position taken by the Director-General. He also made a number of calumnious statements about me, going so far as to say that I had "spent large sums to acquire assets whose value largely exceeded my legal income".

The Director-General replied in these terms: "All the measures I have taken in this affair have been brought fully to the attention of the Executive Board and fully approved by it. I can therefore affirm to Mr. Ghibernea that I here enjoy the trust of all the members of the Board—with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Ghibernea himself—because I refuse to betray the oath I swore on the day I was elected Director-General of the Organization."

Meanwhile, in many countries, the media had begun to talk about my case. My name was becoming known.

A foreign organization

The Romanian authorities then decided to pull out all the stops. On 13 October, criminal proceedings were opened against me and I was accused of "treason by the transmission of secret information". According to article 157 of the Romanian penal code, this crime is punishable by a five- to fifteen-year term of imprisonment and the confiscation of assets. I was accused of having "passed on to agents of a 'foreign organization' (Unesco) information the use of which by that organization threatened the security of the state".

The inquisitors gave me two hours to reply, in writing, to this accusation. I was prepared for this eventuality, which I had been expecting since I had been threatened with it before. In less than twenty minutes I developed the following defence:

"I consider this accusation to be without any foundation whatsoever. None of my actions can be held to constitute an infringement of article 157 of the penal code. According to the report of the commission of inquiry, the accusation is based on contacts I had, between June 1976 and October 1977, with representatives of Unesco, of which Organization I am a staff member. With regard to these contacts I give the following details:

(1) I have never transmitted to anyone information likely to endanger the security of the state.

(2) I consider the idea that an organization like Unesco could use information passed on by an individual to threaten the security of one of its member states, in this case Romania, to be absurd.

(3) My contacts with the representatives of Unesco during the period designated were exclusively concerned with the obligations to the Organization implied by my functions as a member of the Secretariat and by the oath I took when I became a servant of the Organization. These contacts were made in my capacity as a Unesco staff member and therefore do not fall within the terms of article 157 of the penal code. They are, however, in conformity with the provisions of the Convention on the privileges and immunities of specialized agencies, article VI, section M, paragraph (a). This Convention has been ratified by Romania.

(4) In view of the foregoing, I shall henceforth refuse to answer any further questions relating to the above-mentioned accusation."

I thought that I was going to be arrested. However, I was told that I was to remain at liberty, but that I must report to the headquarters of the penal inquiries section of the Securitate every day from eight in the morning until ten at night. This was how I came to experience things I had previously only seen in films—long corridors with many doors, each topped by a red light which lit up whenever there was someone inside, interrogation rooms with barred windows, listening equipment...

The inquisitors began by asking me such questions as: "Do you admit that you passed letters to the Director-General of Unesco via agents of Unesco?", and "When did you first meet the Director of CEPES?" Sticking to the line I had adopted in court, I invariably replied: "I refuse to answer that question."

The inquisitors were very disappointed and said that I was only smoothing the path for my imminent condemnation. To which I replied: "So much the better; I shall return to Paris all the sooner."

After a time the officials in charge of the investigation began to lose heart. The sessions ended earlier and we even got round to talking about subjects other than my case.

The stick and the carrot

On 25 October, seven Securitate agents entered our house in the early morning to make a search and to place our possessions under notice of sequestration. I believe, however, that the real purpose of the operation was to convince us that my condemnation was imminent.

This was not so. On the contrary, on 12 November I was sent for by deputy minister Plechitza. He was all sweetness and light and told me that the judicial pursuits against me were being abandoned for lack of valid grounds. Furthermore, "to demonstrate the

generosity of the authorities", he announced that he had decided to allow my daughter to return to Paris to continue her interrupted university studies. We all found it difficult to believe that this was not some new form of trickery, but three days later my daughter received her passport. Until her arrival in Paris, however, we remained anxious. After all, she could have been taken somewhere else. But a few hours after she had left we received a telephone call from her which included the agreed password to indicate that she had arrived safely.

The following morning the deputy minister called me to say in substance: "We have been generous to you; now it is your turn to show your gratitude by helping us to put an end to the dispute with Unesco. In a few months you will be able to leave the country and rejoin your daughter if you so wish." I replied that the right granted to my daughter to resume her studies seemed no more than normal to me, so why should I change the position I had held since the beginning of the affair? The conversation went on for hours and was resumed on subsequent days. The deputy minister assured me of his esteem and appealed to my "patriotic feelings". At times I found these "conversations" even more painful than those in which my Securitate inquisitors had made all kinds of threats.

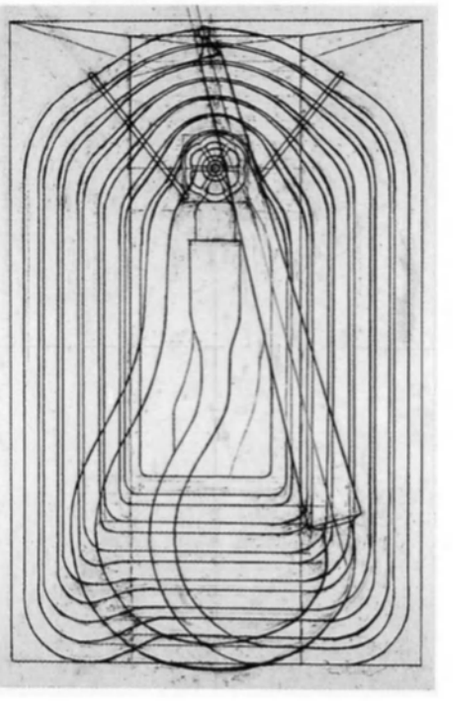
After about a fortnight, the tone changed once again. If I continued to refuse to cooperate with them, said Plechitza, my daughter would be killed on the streets of Paris or brought back by force to Romania. "We have already done this in other cases," he told me. I took this new threat seriously and informed the Director-General of it and he immediately asked the French authorities for protection for my daughter.

After a brief lull, the repressive measures began again early in February 1978. I had several interviews with a secretary of the Central Committee of the Party and former minister of the Securitate, Ion Stanescu. He in his turn threatened to have me thrown in prison and, when I invoked the law, he replied: "There is no law for people like you." I was told that my trial was entering its final stage.

The end of the affair

On 28 February, the press published extracts from a statement I had sent to Paris and which my daughter had made public:

"The tragedy that I have lived through since June 1976 is chiefly that I find myself a prisoner in my own country.... My loyalty to my country is no reason for me to accept the injustice that has been done to me, for me to be the victim of calumny, of abuse of power and of disregard for the law.... On several occasions, those representing the authorities have put forward to me as their major argument that: 'You are a Romanian citizen and the state can do with you what it will.' Since I dislike the feudal undertones of this argument and since any dialogue with the authorities is impossible, I have asked to give up Romanian nationality."



Design for Frustration (1981), charcoal on paper, by Konrad Klapheck (Fed. Rep. of Germany).

On 8 March 1978 one of the most important purges of the Ceausescu regime took place. All the officials with whom I had had dealings were victims of it and I immediately made it known that I would refuse to respond to any judicial summons until I had an opportunity to talk to their replacements.

Meanwhile, international pressures were growing stronger and stronger. Governmental and parliamentary delegations visiting Romania all raised my case, which was also raised on the occasion of Ceausescu's visits abroad.

The United Nations Organization, which until then had remained out of the affair, adopted a position in my favour at a meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination held in April 1978 and chaired by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General gave his support to Mr. M'Bow and took a number of steps: my case would be raised in the United Nations and at the next Unesco General Conference. At a meeting in May, Unesco's Executive Board was informed of a proposal to have the dispute brought before the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Unesco's Staff Association and the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations (FICSA) condemned this attack on the independence of the international civil service and adopted a number of plans of action.

Finally, Ceausescu yielded. On 6 May, I was summoned by the authorities who told me that I was authorized to return to Paris.

On 12 May 1978, my wife and I left Bucharest on a tourist visa, and arrived in Paris two days later after an absence of twenty-three months. On 16 May I resumed my normal duties at Unesco.

I had won, but I shall remain marked for life by this ordeal. ■

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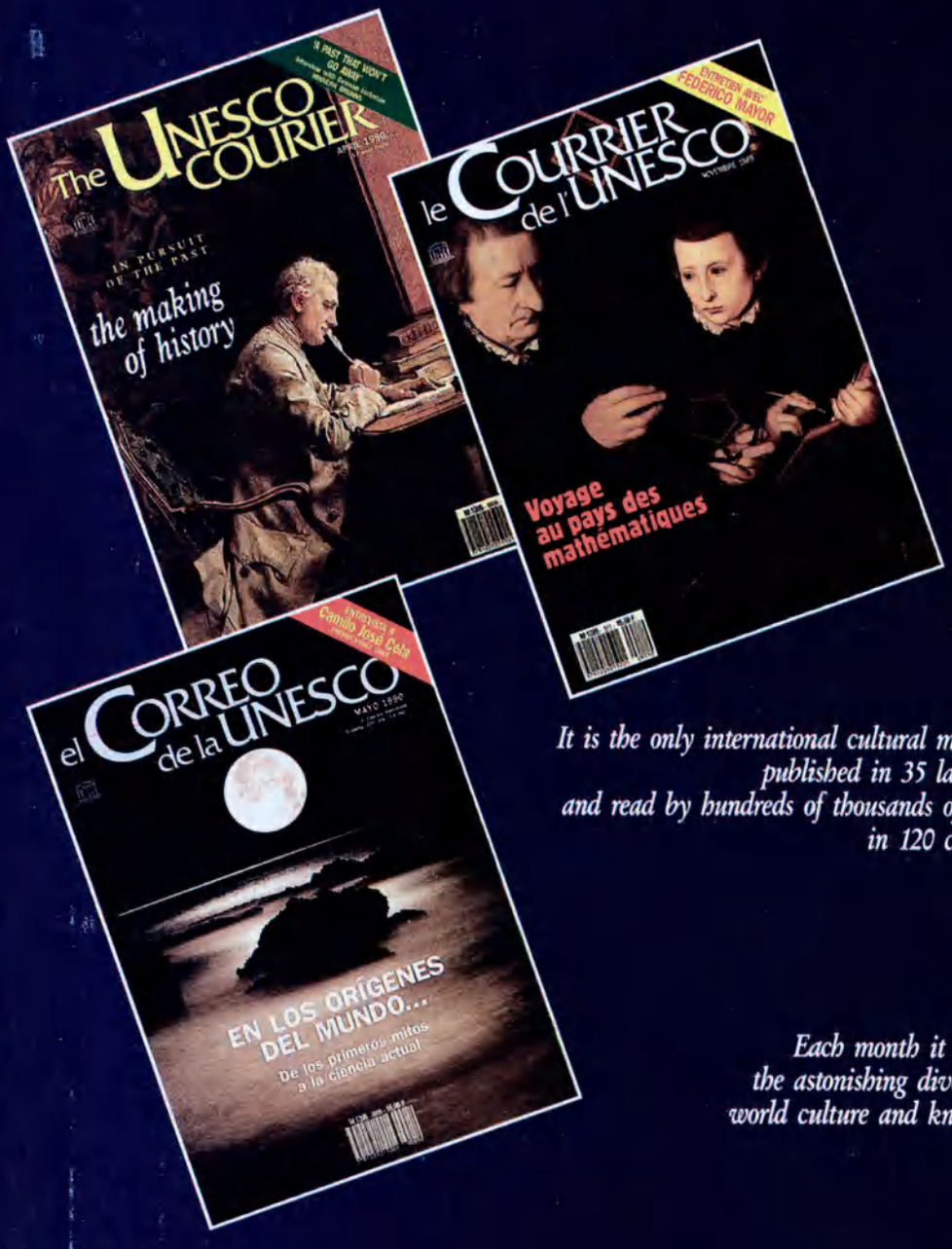
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